# UNCLE DANNY'S NEIGHBORS

By F. B. PEARSON

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# UNCLE DANNY'S NEIGHBORS

# Uncle Danny's Neighbors

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Reveries of a Schoolmaster, The Vitalized School
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M.V.G. 12-12-19.

# UNCLE DANNY'S NEIGHBORS

# Uncle Danny's Neighbors

## CHAPTER I

### A SOLILOQUY

"WELL, Nick, old doggie," said Uncle Danny, "it seems that we are at the verge of things once more. The people have come back from their vacation, and, after they have rested for a few days and become acclimated again, they will certainly invade us, either to see and be seen, to hear and be heard, or to talk and be talked to. You and I, Nick, know these neighbors of ours, and know they are certain to drop in on us on some errand or other. We are experienced in the ways of neighbors, you and I, but we shall see them from some new angles this year, without doubt. So we may as well be prepared and summon all our philosophy and experience to help buttress our position. You and I are not the arbiters of our own fortune, whatever people may say to the contrary, for we know that our plans will be interrupted and modified by these neighbors all through the year, and we must give them a polite

hearing, even if we have to give our plans a vacation.

"Besides, we never know what we shall see when we turn the corner, and that is another negative to the arbiter-of-fortune theory. And, it is better so. Life would lack spice if we could know, in advance, what the happenings will be. You and I don't care to know, in advance, what we are to have for dinner. Anticipation is a real tonic, whether in eating or in talking. It is rare enjoyment to wait around for people to reveal themselves as they would unwrap a package for our inspection. And we know they will do so, if we but give them time, and the fun we derive from the process is worth the time we spend. Now, there's Mrs. Sebring. You know that, when she comes in, we never know whether she'll unpack an assortment of her ailments, or descant upon universal suffrage or echo some one's opinions of the nebular hypothesis. And it doesn't matter which it is; it is all very like sheet-lightning that creates an immense flare but never strikes anything. She probably comes in because she is poor company for herself at home; which proves, Nick, that you and I are of some use in the world. We can help Mrs. Sebring to pass an hour or so in comfort when she can't do it alone.

"After all, Nick, perhaps we are doing as much

good, by listening and talking to the people who come in to see us, as if we were following our own inclinations. In that case, it doesn't matter much about the arbiter-of-fortune theory. Adding our pleasure and our profit, perhaps, in the long run, we are debtors and not creditors. It is said, you know, that knowledge comes from two sources, nature and society, but I am puzzled quite often, when our neighbors drop in, trying to determine whether they are nature or society. But, in either case, we do accumulate vast stores of knowledge from them, and some of it seems to be of some value. But we do drink in a great deal of water to get a little coffee, at times. So many of these folks seem to be the victims of internal confusion and it takes a long time to diagnose their cases and suggest the right remedies.

"Why, I almost laughed in his face when Mr. Raleigh told us the other evening that he leads a dog's life. And there you were, Nick, listening to every word of it. For your sake, I felt like resenting his implication, but I felt sorry for him and saw that you shared my feeling. He didn't mean what he said at all. He meant that he leads an unhealthy human life, which is far less agreeable and profitable than the life that such a dog as you leads, my dear Nick. He ought to go to school to you for a

time and learn how to live. You could teach him a host of things that would be good for him and for those about him. If he had your philosophy of life, he wouldn't be coming over here so often to complain of the tangle of life that he has made for himself and from which he would have us release him.

"If he had your patience, your perseverance, your ability to distinguish between big things and little things, your fidelity, and your serenity, he wouldn't fuss and flutter so much. Dog's life, indeed! Why, Nick, old fellow, such a man as that ought to envy you and come to you to learn the cardinal virtues. But here he is, making a mess of life, and then complaining that he is leading a dog's life. In all the time that we have been chums, you have never failed me once; and the chances are that he fails people every day. I know he fails himself or he would be less querulous. I feel sorry for a man who disappoints himself and then tries to saddle the blame upon some one else. He reminds me of my effort to mix alkali and acid: the result was a fizz.

"Really, Nick, I think I have never mentioned the matter to you, but right here and now I want to make full acknowledgment to you for many valuable lessons. You have taught me many things that

can not be got from books. But for your help, I'd have gone astray many a time, especially in the matter of appraising people. If I were a grocer I'd want you around to let me know which customers could be trusted to run accounts. And, were I a young woman I'd ask you to give all the suitors a critical inspection and make a report upon their eligibility. You seem to know an honest man, on sight, whereas I am often mistaken. You must really interview that young man who calls upon our neighbor, Mary. If you report adversely, we must hit upon some plan to circumvent him. If he falls below her high standards, we must warn him off the premises as a trespasser. I can find out about his family and his prospects, but I must rely upon you to report on the young man himself."

Uncle Danny relapsed into silence for a time and gazed into the wood fire that burned in the grate and threw fantastic pictures upon the walls. Nick knew the mood and kept discreetly quiet. Finally, Uncle Danny continued: "It does seem, Nick, as if we may yet come to rival Atlas in our efforts to carry the world upon our shoulders, if our responsibilities continue to multiply. And we seem to have no choice in the matter. We can't shut the door in the faces of our neighbors, no matter how trivial their errands may seem to us. These errands seem

vastly important to them and we must give them a respectful hearing. Take the case of our neighbor, Mary. We must look after her and see to it that her bark is kept free from rocks and shoals. She's too fine to be permitted to drift. I wonder if you have ever considered the subject of dual personality, Nick? That subject disturbs me no little. You are always so sane, so right, so direct, and so sure of yourself that, I feel certain, your personality is single and not dual. In that you have a great advantage over many of us dual-personality animals. We live a double-track life and jump from one track to the other with such agility that we seem to be playing hide-and-seek with ourselves. And that is disconcerting. That's why we must keep a sharp lookout for our Mary.

"I think I have not mentioned Montaigne to you very often, Nick, which is not to my credit, for he is worthy of frequent mention. He is both incisive and comprehensive in his analyses. Now listen to this. 'Men are tormented by the ideas they have concerning things and not by the things themselves.' What do you think of that, Nick? That touches men off to a nicety, and, especially, some of our neighbors. They wallow about in a nebulous confusion of their ideas of things and fail to see the things as they really are. They have vague, hazy, crooked ideas of dogs but they never see you as you

are. I am often tempted to introduce you to them, only they would not understand. If they could only understand—but, in that case, they would not be the sort of people they are. They think of you as only a dog, or merely a dog, but if they could be brought to understand what you really know about them, they might slough off some of their indifference to your presence in the scheme of things. If they could be brought to show proper respect to you they would have greater respect for themselves.

"It would be no end of fun, Nick, to adjust the mirror, somehow, so that these people could see themselves as you and I see them. It would certainly give some of them a jolt. But they are so taken up with their ideas of you and me that it never occurs to them that you and I have our own notions of them. It would require a surgical operation to cause them to see themselves as others see them. And, even if they could, they would probably consider it a mirage. I suspect we are in for a course in surgery. Did it ever occur to you, Nick, how many of our neighbors seem to be suffering from mental and spiritual vagabondage? If we could only help them to emerge from their confusion and see just a few things straight, it would be a fine bit of missionary work, on our part. Their thoughts roll, and tumble, and toss about like people on the deck of a ship in a storm, so that they can't fix their

attention upon anything long enough to know it as it really is.

"There, Nick, I know you must be tired and sleepy, but I do hope you will bear with me yet a little longer, for I want that you and I shall come to a common understanding of these neighbors of ours that we may act in unison when they fall afoul of us as they are certain to do. My observation leads to the conclusion that there are only two classes of people in the world—those who know many things of which they do not talk, and those who talk a great deal about things of which they know little or nothing. Of the latter class there are quite a few who do much of their talking in this very room, as you very well know. They would scorn to come in here clad in second-hand clothing, and yet, they do not disdain second-hand ideas. On the contrary, they revel in them and try to pass this sort of coin off on us as if it were fresh from the mint. They recite from the morning sermon, or the morning paper, or some book and try to impress us with the notion that they have been making some original discoveries.

"If these folks were subject to arrest for trying to pass counterfeit ideas as they would be for passing counterfeit money we could have a host of them in jail. They drift in here invested in mental

habiliments that would befit a harlequin and expect us to esteem them as paragons in the hierarchy of fashion and haberdashery. They seem to assume that we never hear sermons, or read books and papers, but that we are pre-historic in our thinking and in our practises. And we dare not laugh. It is really unfair to subject our politeness and our hospitality to such a severe strain. They may look upon us as cave-dwellers, or as members of the proletariat, and our ways may be inscrutable to them, but we must be polite and complaisant.

"I tell you, Nick, these people are over-fed and pampered with their notions of themselves and are in dire need of treatment. So it behooves us to put on our armor, gird up our loins, put oil in our vessels, inflate our spiritual tires and be ready for them when they come. We must try to find some pabulum that will enlarge and nourish their souls for their souls are suffering from inanition. We have it laid upon us, Nick, to play the rôle of salvage artists. They are valiant in small and second-hand talk simply because they have never been inoculated with the virus of big desires. Having only little desires, they magnify little things into mountains; but, if they can be brought to achieve big desires, their mountains will dwindle to mole-hills and they will be able to see life big and real.

"We must shake them up a bit and try to avert atrophy and obsolescence. We must explode something underneath their abysmal sameness and dullness, and turn some search-light upon their Stygian darkness or they will become intolerable as neighbors. We must arouse them from the torpor of blighting self-complacency and stagnation and try to make them conscious that there are things above them that are well worth looking at. What we must do is to cause some of our tepid neighbors to boil, and seethe, and surge for the ultimate salvation of their souls.

"You know, Nick, Montaigne says 'The wisdom of my instruction consists in liberty and naked truth.' So if we can set these folks free from the trammels of their in-growing souls and then give them a stiff dose of naked truth, now and then, we shall be doing them and this neighborhood a very distinct service. And it will be another adventure for us, too, or rather, another part of the great adventure which is life. Besides, it will have keen zest for us, whether or not it profits them. When they invade us we must manage, somehow, to pervade them, if possible, and thus give them a mild foretaste of the people they are yet to become if our ministrations shall but prove effective. With facile diplomacy we must steal into their consciousness and, thus, into their

habits of thinking and living, and yet have them feel that we are there at their express invitation.

"What we must do, Nick, is to render their souls rhythmical, so that they may vibrate and pulsate in harmony with the big laws of life. Otherwise they will think and live counter to these big laws and so dwarf their own souls. We must play the rôle of dragomans, in a personally conducted tour, and show these neighbors around among the big elemental facts of life, that they may cease to frivol among little things. If we can only discover the magic talisman that will cause them to blossom and bear fruit we shall have done much. But, dear me, if we expect to execute this large program, we shall need some sleep. So, good night, Nick."

## CHAPTER II

### THE GRADE TEACHER

"You awful Uncle Danny," exploded Mary Benton, rushing into his study just after supper. "I came over to give you a good shaking, and you richly deserve one, too."

Mary's impetuous entrance and menacing language excited Uncle Danny not at all; and so without changing his position from his lounging attitude he drawled, "Well, my dear, when duty and inclination run parallel like that the whole matter is greatly simplified."

"Now, don't you try to divert my mind from my purpose," she warned, shaking her finger at him, "and don't try to crawl out of it through some knothole of philosophical and facetious persiflage."

"What an amazing vocabulary for such a small person," he exclaimed.

Perching herself on the arm of his Morris chair and running her fingers through his shock of gray hair, she said, "Never you mind about the vocabulary. Each word has a deep meaning if you could only understand it."

"Help!" laughed Uncle Danny, throwing up his hands to ward off an imaginary blow.

"Oh, you'll need help," said Mary, sitting bolt upright and turning his head until she could bestow him a straight look of simulated severity, "for I'm going to shake you and shake you good."

Uncle Danny sighed in resignation. "Well, if I deserve shaking and must be shaken," he said solemnly, "I don't know of any one into whose hands I would prefer to commit the orgy, or ordeal, or rite, or ceremony, or—"

"Nightmare," she interpolated.

"Well, nightmare, if you will have it so. Here I sit in peaceful contemplation, feeling unusually urbane, benevolent, and virtuous," he continued in mock tones of depression, "when like a whirlwind, in rushes a slip of a girl bedight in war-paint and feathers, and threatens me with physical violence. May I meekly inquire to what freak of fortune I am indebted for this precipitate and belligerent visitation?"

"You certainly may," she answered, slipping to the foot-stool at his feet and making herself quite comfortable against his knee. "Now, if you will deign to keep quiet I'll try to elucidate."

He bowed his head ceremoniously and replied in

a hollow voice, "I deign, oh, thou petite Nemesis; now do your worst."

Mary did her utmost to assume a fierce look. "Well, sir, you visited my school this afternoon."

"Was that a crime?"

"It certainly was."

"Very well, then," said he, "I sentence myself to prison thirty days on bread and water."

"The penalty is not adequate," she replied, shaking her head

"Your school is a public school, isn't it?"

"Not so public that it is open to every calloused sinner who chooses to slip in when the teacher's back is turned."

"But, I'm a tax-payer," he objected.

"Not to any alarming extent," flashed Mary.

"Did you hear that, Nick?" asked Uncle Danny. "Are you going to lie there asleep and permit the head of the house to be bombarded by the most impertinent bit of baggage that ever disturbed the serenity of a peaceful home?"

Nick thumped the floor half-heartedly with his stump of a tail, merely to indicate his consciousness of passing events, and then went back to his dreams, with only this feeble show of interest.

"There! Even your best friend deserts you," she laughed. "What about disturbing the serenity of

a peaceful school? Why, you walked in there as airily as if you were responding to a hand-painted invitation."

"And yet you made over me as if I had been the Prodigal Son just getting in."

"Why, of course," she replied. "In society and in school people must be polite no matter how they feel."

"A sort of refined hypocrisy, as it were?" he suggested.

"Certainly. 'Assume a virtue though you have it not,' as your beloved Shakespeare has it."

"Mary, my child, just how have you accumulated all this worldly wisdom?"

"So you would steal my formula, would you?" she interrogated, with arched eyebrows.

"If I did, it would be grand larceny. But whence so much wisdom in one so young?"

Rising, she stood directly before him, riveting her gaze upon him. Presently she said, "Uncle Danny, I have often wondered about your early life. I now realize that you must at some time have been the custodian of Blarney Castle. You can't be explained otherwise. But as to my youth and wisdom I shall probably outgrow both if I continue to teach school."

"I hope not," said he seriously.

"Amen!" she responded as she proceeded to re-

plenish the fire with two sticks of wood. As she leaned against the mantelpiece watching the blaze Uncle Danny bestowed upon her a benevolent smile. At length his voice broke the eloquent silence.

"Well," said he, "now that you have a rational moment, will you explain your effervescence when you burst in upon me?"

"Why, I was seething."

"Good!" he exclaimed heartily. "That's a hopeful symptom. I do admire a school-teacher who can seethe, now and then, whose spiritual nature is undulatory and not a dead level of primness, precision, and placidity."

"Well, I ought to be in high favor with you, then," she said, smiling.

"Not unless you can explain your furious outburst."

"It doesn't need explanation," she retorted. "You came to my school on a rainy day."

"Oho! And is that all?"

"All? All?" she cried, stamping her foot. "Surely that is quite enough."

"I infer," said he, "that visitors to your school must be versed in the science of meteorology, and must consult the barometer, the thermometer and the weather prognostications in advance of the visit so as not to violate the proprieties."

"For once, kind sir, you are right."

"So visitors are not welcome," he continued, "when rain is falling, nor on the day after the teacher has her hair washed, nor yet on the day when a retarded washer-woman fails to provide her with a clean shirt-waist? Why don't you post a notice to the effect that visitors are welcome only when the sun is shining, when the wind is in the East, when the temperature is not below seventy, and when the teacher's digestive organs are rightly performing their appointed functions?"

"You blessed old impossible idiot," she exclaimed.

"Mary," he asked deferentially, "just what has been your experience with idiots?"

"Why, Uncle Danny, I've known you for ever so long."

"Why, Nick," cried he as if in anguish, "how can you lie there like that? Why don't you get up and bite her, and then bite her again?"

"Aha!" mocked Mary. "You call for help, do you? Two against one isn't fair."

"Well," said he, "I may need to call out my reserves but I haven't struck my colors yet."

"Better defer your boasting till after my settlement with you for coming to my school on a rainy day."

"Shades of Jupiter Pluvius!" he agonized. "Isn't

a harmless citizen permitted to go in out of the rain?"

"Harmless citizen, indeed!" she replied mockingly. "Just when I am trying to get my youngsters into some semblance of order——"

"Order?" he interrupted. "Mary, what do you call order in a school?"

Mary hesitated, knowing that Uncle Danny had asked a big question. Finally, she replied, "Well, I am not in sympathy with that notion of order that would have the same quiet in a school that prevails in a gallery of statues. Still, you know that on rainy days the children are restless and fidgety."

"Fidgety! Your grandmother's shoe-strings! Of course, they are fidgety, just as children ought to be. If they are not fidgety, they need the doctor. Their squirming is a sign of good health. When I see a teacher who would have children sit absolutely quiet in those prison-like desks with their hands folded and their faces as demure as if they were reciting the golden text I get so——"

"Careful, careful, Uncle Danny," warned Mary. "Please don't forget that there is a lady present and that you are a preacher."

Laughingly, Uncle Danny replied, "I beg your pardon, Mary, and thank you for reminding me. Being a member of the cloth certainly has its draw-

backs. But, Mary, what do you do when you get to feeling like that?"

"I explode."

"Just so," said he. "But suppose the environment is not favorable to explosions, then what?"

"Oh, in that case," she responded, "I have recourse to my German. I simply use the word *damit,* somehow, and that relieves the tension and clears the atmosphere. Surely a church-member is permitted to say 'therewith.' "

"Excellent!" said Uncle Danny, slapping his knee. "Mary, you have filled a long-felt want, and I thank you for your timely relief expedition. Your suggestion is a positive boon. It is said that Gladstone, after hearing one of the Queen's speeches, at the opening of Parliament, used to go out to the forest on his estate and chop a tree down to take the taste out of his mouth. But your plan is better in that it is capable of instantaneous application."

"Then, too, Uncle Danny," said she, "there might be danger of your denuding the forests, if you followed the plan of Gladstone."

On the instant he made answer, "Not if all teachers were as natural, and human, and wholesome as Mary Benton."

"You thrice-blessed, uncanonized saint!" said Mary with a broad hint of moisture in her eyes and

in her voice. "Here I've been fishing all this time for just one word of comfort and began to think you were too stingy, or else too truthful to give it to me. Then, like a flash, you overwhelm me with a veritable inundation. I feel as if I had drawn a prize, or been crowned Queen o' the May, or something. Why, Uncle Danny, I want to hug you."

"Mary," he drawled in a level monotone, "there are some propensities of the heart that should never be repressed."

"Very well, then, my dear sir," she replied with an air of feigned resignation, "profiting by your sage counsel, I shall refrain from repressing my inclination to announce to you that I have doffed my martial airs and habiliments and now appear in your august presence bearing a flag of truce and professing myself athirst for copious draughts from the Pierian spring of your pedagogical wisdom."

"Hear! Hear!" cried Uncle Danny, springing to his feet, as if in great excitement. "Wake up, Nick, wake up! You are missing a mighty avalanche of language whose like you may never hear again." Then, resuming his sitting posture, he went on. "Well, putting the matter thus, Mary, your Uncle Danny can not bring himself to give you a stone when you are asking for bread. Through all your luxuriant and succulent verbiage I can clearly

perceive that you have the right attitude, and the habitual mental attitude of a teacher is ever more highly significant. You are willing, yes anxious, to learn, and that is the hall-mark of a good teacher. If you ever cease to be a learner, you will cease to be a teacher worth her salt. To be a learner you must live down on the ground where real things and real people are to be found. You can never teach school on horseback, nor from the forks of a tree, nor on stilts. I do hope you may never become oracular. I'd lose faith in you, too, if I should ever catch you ladling out platitudinous palaver to your children or trying to work some little pedagogical trick that you learned from a book. I hope you will always be our own real, individual, vital Mary Benton in your school and not try to teach school as the proxy of some one else. You will read the books, of course, but I beg you to keep a firm grip on your sanity, while doing so.

"And, above all things, Mary, keep right on doing as you were doing this afternoon. You were treating the children as human beings, who have feelings and propensities, and not as specimens to be experimented with or inanimate pawns to be moved about on some theoretical pedagogical chessboard. Again, I like the natural tone of voice you use in talking to the children. I can't see why teachers

can't talk of numbers and geography as they would talk of birds, or flowers, if they were talking to children in their own homes. If ever you develop a screeching, high-pitched, rasping, teachery voice I shall have you arrested for disturbing the peace.

"And, again, Mary, I do hope you may never degenerate into a mere school-teaching machine. The mechanical teacher is a sin against childhood, and should be expatriated, or eliminated in some way. Her voice is tin-panny, and she moves about as if she could be opened only with a time-lock and started going only by means of a crank or a lever. I never can make out whether she is super-human, sub-human, or merely un-human. I don't see how the children can help throwing things at such a teacher. I like teachers who are real folks and not mechanicians or technicians."

"Halt!" cried Mary, assuming an attitude of alarm. "Why, Uncle Danny, you are liable to have a stroke if you go on like that. I didn't know you could become so violent—Your fulminations do not remind me of the cooing dove in the least. You should study repose of character."

"Repose fiddlesticks," he exploded. "There can be no repose of any thing or sort where these time-lock teachers are concerned, who open with a creak at eight o'clock and shut with a bang at half past

three; who talk like a phonograph, and act like the——"

But Mary had her hand over his mouth and so never knew what the next word might have been. Presently, she said gently, "Now, Uncle Danny, be calm. They'll turn you out of church if this thing keeps on. And you know it would go hard with you, at your age, to repent and be converted all over again."

"Look here, young woman," he retorted, "I'm old enough to be one of your ancestors, and yet you assume the prerogative of holding a brief for my moral conduct. Oh, effrontery, thy name is Mary Benton. Now, if you'll subside and efface yourself for a bit, I'll continue to give you spiritual and pedagogical nourishment."

"Yes," replied she, laughing aloud, "and disfigure your immortal soul in the process."

"Now don't waste any sympathy on my immortal soul," he warned, "when I am trying to save your pedagogical soul."

"Oh, very well," she replied. "If you feel that way about it, I wash my hands of all responsibility and let your immortal soul sink or swim, survive or perish. Now go right on and trundle your pedagogical salvation wagon."

"Oh, excess baggage!" he mocked. "Thou Ver-

dant Freshman in the great school of life! Thy flippant words and mordant irony move me not. Complacent as the mountain peak that——"

"Rah! Rah! Rah! Who's all right? Uncle Danny!"

"Quite so," he replied gently, "and that being the case, I proceed to say that my one big hope is that the work of teaching may never absorb the whole of Mary Benton. I want a big part of her left over for some other phases of life. Teaching is only a part of life, my child, not the whole of it. A lot of teachers mush and gush about their devotion to their work, but all that is a mere pose. If they were big enough to teach school and be virile human beings at the same time they would be too big to indulge in that sort of skim-milk talk. Of course, they ought to be devoted to their work while they are at it, just as your mother is devoted to pie-making when she is baking pies, and to music when she is playing the piano. Your mother ranks high up as a baker of pies, as I know from large and delightful experience, but she is far better and bigger than the best pie she ever baked. So I hope you will be an excellent teacher, but so much bigger than your work of teaching that you will be able to do a lot of other things equally well. I do hope you may never play the piano pedagogically, nor

sing in the choir pedagogically, nor darn your stockings pedagogically. I want to see Mary Benton around here a part of the time and not the schoolteacher all of the time. I want to see a host of things Mary Bentonized and not all of them teacherized."

"Verily, Sir Oracle," said Mary, "that's a large order."

"Very true, Miss Disciple," replied he, "but we must have a large frame for a large picture. We don't want a pygmy teacher if we are to have something beyond a pygmy school."

"But, Uncle Danny," she asked, "can I ever fill your big frame?"

"Certainly, you can, Mary," he responded, "and I'll tell you how I know. You are alive, gloriously alive, and it is not easy to set limits to the teacher who is really alive and growing larger all the while. Then, too, you are an intelligent listener, and that betokens the right sort of docility. And, best of all, you have understanding and a delicious sense of humor. These noble qualities will help you fill the frame. People who have understanding are a great comfort. They can see more on the printed page than the author can possibly express. They can see in the painting what the artist yearns to express. but can not to his satisfaction. The author and the

artist are crying aloud to people through their productions, but only the people who have understanding can hear and know what they are saying. The people who understand can read between the lines and see below the surface of things; and so can interpret life in the large. Yes, Mary, I have faith that you will be able to fill the frame."

"Uncle Danny," said she with a tremor in her voice, "you are the blessedest friend that a girl ever had, and, for your sake, I'll try my best to fill the frame and try to become the sort of teacher you would like me to be. Only in that way shall I be able to show my gratitude to you."

She stood for a moment resting her hand upon his head and then with a fervent "Good night, Uncle Danny," she was gone.

Leaning his arm on the mantel and gazing intently into the embers, Uncle Danny finally said, "Well, Nick, if all our neighbors were such as Mary, we'd have small cause for worry. There's a fine girl, Nick, a fine girl."

## CHAPTER III

### THE MOTHER

JUST when Mrs. Elysabethe Marietta Smythe stepped inside the door of Uncle Danny's study, a few evenings after Mary Benton's visit, Nick gave expression to a low, deep, prolonged growl, as if some sinister and malevolent influence had invaded his consciousness and disturbed his habitual serenity. Uncle Danny became keenly alert at once, being fully aware of Nick's infallibility in the way of judging people and sensing pivotal situations, and knowing, therefore, that his growl was ominous and boded no agreeable interview. Although somewhat overawed by Mrs. Smythe's tumultuous presence, Uncle Danny kept a close grip on himself and gave her an impression of imperturbability closely akin to stoicism. However, being quite an adept in carrying off situations somewhat nonchalantly, she treated Uncle Danny's rigidity with something of disdain, as if, indeed, it had been anticipated, and did not at all connect it with the growl of Nick, whom she quite ignored as altogether negligible and outside the pale of her interests. The subtle understanding

between Uncle Danny and Nick would naturally elude her, for she lived her life in broad sweeping strokes, nor was her perspicacity equal to the finer, the subtler, and the more delicate things of life.

It is ever true that a fatuous belief in themselves often deludes people and renders them impervious to the finer sensibilities. This will explain how it was that Mrs. Smythe took the chair to which Uncle Danny, with courtly grace, escorted her as if she were a queen taking her rightful place upon the throne and began at once cooing forth inane platitudes in a voice that was oleaginous, with a diction that abounded in slang, and in language whose substantives and verbs were in such obvious disagreement as to dim the splendor of her sartorial upholstery. After a deal of inconsequential and ungrammatical chatter by which she evidently hoped to impress her auditor, she finally launched into the subject that was responsible for the call. "Uncle Danny," she said, "for I hope you will let me call you by the name that is on every tongue in this town, I'm here to ask your help in a matter that is to be just between you and I. Everybody tells me you are so sympathetic, so sensible, and so kind that I just felt it in my bones that I could come to you and talk to you right down on the ground."

At this juncture Nick repeated the ominous growl

that had put Uncle Danny on his guard and moved uneasily on the rug in front of the fire. Whether the cells of his brain were disturbed by Mrs. Smythe's defection from the accepted forms of speech to which he was accustomed or whether he knew that her opening remarks presaged momentous happenings, even Uncle Danny could not determine. But both Nick and Uncle Danny were conscious that some sinister influence had pervaded the room as an emanation that quickened their anticipatory faculties. Mrs. Smythe, however, was blissfully oblivious to any such influence and pursued the even tenor of her ways.

"You see, Uncle Danny," she continued, "I am so sensitive and so sympathetic myself, that I come to you as to a kindred spirit. I know you'll understand me for everybody tells me you are such an understanding man."

"Oh, yes," he replied, "there are things that I can understand without the aid of a map."

"To be sure you can, you dear man," she purred, "and that's why I have come right straight to you. Well, you see, to get right down to brass tacks, or tracks, whichever it is, over in the high school they have put in something that they call domestic science and they say my daughter, Guinevere De Armond, has just got to take it. I'm so busy with all my

social duties that at first I didn't pay any attention to the thing and just let it slide. But just to-day I got wise to what this domestic science stuff really is and I'm now on the warpath. Why, believe me, it is just plain cooking and dish-washing, and any one who thinks that I'll let a daughter of mine degrade herself by messin' around with pots and pans has another guess coming."

"Horrible."

"Ain't it the truth? I knowed you'd understand my feelings. The very idea of Guinevere spoiling her hands in dish-water when I'm trying to get her ready to play at the musicale that our club is to put on in the holidays, why, it's just awful! Besides, it is so common, this being a kitchen-mechanic—positively low and vulgar. I didn't raise my girl to be a servant. Why, Uncle Danny, Guinevere De Armond Smythe has Mayflower blood in her veins, or arteries, or wherever the blood is. I suppose they'd have her scrubbing the front porch as a post-graduate course, if I'd let 'em have their way, but I just won't and that's all there is to it. I'm going to raise my daughter as a lady if I have to walk all over every member of that school board and every teacher in the whole outfit. I'm going to have culture for my child, I'm here to tell you."

"Bravo! Great is culture!" cried Uncle Danny.

"Ain't it?" she said, as she smoothed out and readjusted some of her garnishings of ribbons and laces. "Why, Uncle Danny, if some of us choice spirits didn't keep up the tone of this community, it would soon go to the bow-wows. And, I'm so glad to find that you are in such complete sympathy with my high ideals. You are a real comfort, and I could almost wish you was a woman."

"Heaven forfend!"

"Oh, you funny man! You ought to be in the movies. Why, last night me and Guinevere went to see Charlie Chaplin and——" But just then Nick set up such a dismal howl as dogs indulge in when a bell rings, and Uncle Danny was spared further details.

"What in the wide world can be the matter with that awful dog? Is he having bad dreams?" asked Mrs. Smythe, evidently disconcerted.

"I dare say."

"Well, I do hope he'll not have any more like that."

"Yes, I, too, hope there may be no occasion for a repetition."

"Let's see, where was I?" she resumed. "Oh, yes, I was speaking of culture. Why, Uncle Danny, Guinevere's a regular glutton for good books. She knows *Mrs. Wiggs* almost by heart. When I was

a girl I got a lot of the works of Augusta Evans and Laura Jean Libbey and Guinevere simply devours them. She does so appreciate good literature! Why, just the other night I went into her room, and there the dear child was sobbing as if her heart would break, and I found that she had come to that place in the story where the young man is telling the girl that if she won't be his'n he——"

"Here, Nick, wake up! I'm afraid you are about to have another bad dream."

"Why, Uncle Danny, how can you tell?"

"Oh, I'm so conversant with his idiosyncrasies that I seem to have a sort of prophetic prescience where he is concerned."

"Ain't that awful—I mean lovely?"

"Well, it has its uses."

"Now, Uncle Danny, I wish you'd tell me how I'm to put a stop to this cooking and dish-washing nonsense, and get them to give Guinevere the things that will give her culture. I want her to have accomplishments and not be a mere house drudge. Suppose the young men of our set should find out that she is a domestic sciencer——"

"Wouldn't that be awful!"

"Now, wouldn't it! I turn cold and goose-fleshy whenever I think of it. Why, if one of them young men should ask me how she is getting on with her

cooking, I'd be modified to death. You see, she is so refined that——"

"Family trait?"

"Exactly," she replied with fervor. "I have a reputation for refinement in this town that I'm proud of, and I expect my daughter to boost the family name. That's why I took her abroad with me last summer. I thought it would give her some more culture, so she could give pointers to some of the boobs in this burg. And it would of done you good to see how interested she was in them big stores in Paris. I could hardly drag her away she got so interested in the pretty things. Things that are beautiful is her long suit. She certainly has an artistic temperature. And the theaters and picture-shows, why, it was downright astonishing the way she appreciated everything. One day there in Paris we got on one of them merry-go-rounds and had more fun than a box of monkeys."

"Did you visit the art galleries much?"

"Well, I should say not! Catch us poking around among dead things when there was so much to see that was exciting. We did go to see that Venus stature one day, but when I seen that she was stark naked you bet I hiked by in a jiffy and Guinevere never seen the thing at all. I think it scandalous to have a woman like that so exposed."

"And what is your favorite among the places you visited in Europe?"

"Oh, Wiesbaden beats 'em all to a standstill. The music and dancing there was just divine, and Guinevere did so enjoy it all. We was both right in the swim. The young fellows just swarmed around us all the time."

"How did you like the Cathedral at Cologne?"

"Let's see; Cologne, Cologne? Oh, yes, that's the place where we got lunch at the automat—put your money in a slot and get things to eat and drink. It was too funny for anything."

"And you visited Rome?"

"Bet your boots we did; and Rome is a peach of a place to buy gloves."

"Did you see the Sistine Ceiling?"

"No, indeed. Guinevere don't care a button for architecture and I'm not so keen about it myself that you can notice it."

"Did you get down to Pompeii?"

"Well, I should say we did; and of all the stupid places, that takes the biscuit. All I could see in that poky place was them pesky lizards; ugh!"

"You came out from Naples, didn't you?"

"Oh, yes, Naples. So it was."

Uncle Danny was silent for a time and then, as if trying to get his bearings, he went on: "Mrs.

Smythe, I have often wondered what were the influences at Naples that caused you to change your name from 'Smith' to 'Smythe.' Did the climate, the sea, the blue of the sky, and the languorous life get into your blood and make you sentimental? Did the Bay, and Vesuvius, and Capri, and the seductive music, and the gaily-dressed dancers in the streets make you feel that the name 'Smith' did not comport with your importance as a part of the glory of the place? Or what was it?"

"Uncle Danny, you're not laughing at me, are you?"

"By no manner of means. I feel far nearer to tears than to laughter."

"Well, of all the absurd things! But why?"

"Well, I'll tell you, since you ask. You were married to a good man by the name of Smith, who idolizes you and indulges every whim that floats into your whimsical head. Last summer he sent you to Europe, ostensibly to win culture for your daughter, but, in reality, because you thought of a trip abroad as a step upward on the social ladder. You are ambitious to surpass your neighbors, and the trip to Europe was but a means to this end. Then, in Naples, when you were quite fed up on the notion of your superiority, you cast aside the name of the man who supports you in idleness and pampers you,

and fastened upon him, upon your daughter, and upon yourself a name that does not belong to you and to which you have not the slightest right. You thought and think it has a more aristocratic sound, and for that reason you appropriated it without any semblance of justification. Your husband's parents are both living, but you have repudiated their name and made their son, your husband, do the same. I dare not think of the bitter tears his good mother has shed over this unfilial act."

"Why, Uncle Danny, what does all this mean? You preach at me as if I had committed a crime. Are you trying to read me a lecture?"

"Bless you, no. I'm merely trying to give your soul a massage."

"Trying to what?"

"Give your soul a massage, and it is in dire need of heroic treatment. The case has gone on so long that I can't hold out much hope to you, but I may be able to help your daughter."

"Help Guinevere? What help does she need?"

"The answer to that question," replied Uncle Danny, "would fill a book. She needs about everything except the things you are giving her."

"Why, Uncle Danny, you're seeing spooks."

"Singular number, feminine gender, please."

"Look here! I don't know what you are talking about."

"Certainly not, but no matter. As I was about to say, you came to me to enlist my interest and cooperation in your desire to thwart the efforts of the school authorities to do for your daughter what her own mother has failed to do for her. They are trying to make a real lady of her, but her mother is striving to snatch her away from them so as to make a prig and a snob of her. It may seem a blunt and brutal thing to say, but you are trying to cheat the Lord and this town out of a fine girl and make a ninny of her."

"Look here, my dear sir, you are talking about my daughter."

"On the contrary," he replied, "I am speaking, just now, of your daughter's mother and find the theme quite ample for my vocabulary. You ought to write fiction for you are doing your utmost to transform a genuine girl into a work of fiction. Think of the name with which you have burdened her. Only a girl a little, if any, lower than the angels could possibly live up to a name like that. You'd expect a girl with that name to paint and powder her face. You are striving to have the daughter glorify the mother, and seem willing to

sacrifice the best interests of that daughter to accomplish your purpose. You think of her debt to you, but never of your debt to her."

"A mother in debt to her daughter?"

"Indeed, yes, deeply in debt; and unless you begin paying that debt in the coin of the realm very soon, you'll pay it in scalding tears, later on, with accrued interest compounded. You owed her a sensible name, but repudiated that debt at the very outset. You owe her a home atmosphere that is pure, invigorating, and sincere. Instead of that she lives in the atmosphere of a hothouse. You owed her a home and gave her a house, instead. She has no home, but lives in a show-house and herself is made a part of the show. You want her to be bright, quick, pretty, chic, pert, flirtatious—everything but sensible. As soon as any one suggests a sensible thing, you balk."

She sprung to her feet at this, and made it evident that Uncle Danny had touched the quick. She was aroused; her teeth and claws were becoming visible; there were things rushing into her horizon that made her forget her expensive clothing, her aplomb, and her regnancy. At last, she was on the defensive; she was in the presence of a masterful man; she was looking stark truth straight in the eye, and it made her wince. But, even with her back to the

wall, her self-assurance and her bravado did not wholly leave her, and she demanded to know what warrant he had for saying a thing like that. Such a tense situation always steadies Uncle Danny, and so, being at his best, he continued in even mellow tones while Mrs. Smythe towered above him: "You disdain the noble art of cooking and seem to think your daughter would decline from her high estate if she should bake a beautiful brown loaf. You seem to think that the young men who haunt your drawing-room would vanish should they discover in Guinevere the author of that loaf. If that is true, then you should show those young chaps the door without ceremony, for they would, thereby, prove themselves parasites and not men at all. They would be unworthy of your daughter and of such a home as she ought to have. You talk of culture and refinement, not realizing, apparently, that home-making, including culinary skill, is a noble and gracious accomplishment."

"But, Uncle Danny, you wouldn't have my daughter become a common cook?"

"There you go again, using that word 'common.' If your daughter becomes what she is capable of becoming: if she is genuine through and through, then no work that she ever does will be common. She will grace and ennoble the kitchen and redeem

cooking from the rank of the common and elevate it to the plane of a fine art."

"Uncle Danny," said she, her face relaxing into an incipient smile, "almost thou persuadest me to be a cook."

"Good!" he exclaimed. "There's hope for you yet, and I'm glad. The trouble with you has been that a well-dressed and prosperous-looking young man always suggests rice and slippers to you, with Guinevere wearing a bridal veil. But your plans for her never advance beyond the ring ceremony. You can't visualize the months and years that are to follow that ceremony. You plan to have her catch a man, but never consider what she is to do with or for him after she catches him."

"But," asked she, resuming her chair, "has a mother no rights in the bringing up of her own child?"

"Oh, rights!" Uncle Danny retorted with some show of warmth. "People are thinking so much of their rights that they seem to forget about their privileges. Certainly, you have rights. So has Guinevere. She has a right to smoke cigarettes, use coarse and ungrammatical language, and make herself generally cheap in the estimation of people who are really sensible. You have a right to encourage her in all these things—to paint, and powder, and

pose, and be superficial generally. But it is your high privilege to train your daughter in all those qualities that will make of her a sweet, amiable, cultured, intelligent young lady, a fit associate for kings and queens. Up to now, however, your training has been such as will make of her a cross between a flirt and a hoyden. And you seem to think all this makes for aristocracy and distinction. Let's see, your father was a butcher, wasn't he?"

"Well, yes, he was, but——"

"No 'but' about it. He was a butcher, and you never need to apologize either for your father or his business. The world needs butchers, and when we come upon such an honest butcher as John McGinness we ought to be proud of him. And yet, you have been rather ashamed of your origin and have been trying to persuade your daughter that she is of finer clay than her maternal grandfather. Well, she isn't, and I do hope that John McGinness may never have occasion to hang his head either because of his daughter or his granddaughter."

"You are positively brutal, sir!"

"There now, be calm. Surgery never resembles a Sunday-school picnic, but it does often save life. However, the operation is about over now, whether the patient recovers or not. In concluding this brutality, let me express the hope that you may yet

come to have as much concern for the inside of Guinevere's head as you have for the outside. If you will seriously consider the aristocracy of sense and character instead of the imaginary aristocracy of clothes and cosmetics, in twenty years from now that fine daughter of yours will rise up and call you blessed. But, if you continue to dress her to look like a Christmas tree, she will never attract a young man who is sensible enough to be the father of your grandchildren."

"But, Uncle Danny, we never mention such subjects as that in our home."

"No, of course you don't. There's the pity of it. You never distinguish between a male and a man. And only a prude declines to meet such issues face to face. It is high time you were devoting some thought to your grandchildren. If they do not come up to standard you will want to hold Providence responsible and acquit yourself of all blame. Upon the right training of your daughter depends the sort of grandchildren you will have; for, if you train her right, you need not be over-anxious as to the sort of son-in-law she will annex to the family group. And here endeth the lesson."

Taking a long, deep breath, Mrs. Smythe remarked, "Well, anyhow, Uncle Danny, I now know what a steam-roller is.

"Yes? Well, it is very often a means of grace. By the way, do you happen to know Mary Benton?"

"You mean the school-teacher?"

"Yes."

"Oh, yes, I know her by sight."

"You ought to learn her by heart."

"Is she as good as all that? She must be another means of grace."

"She certainly is," was Uncle Danny's reply; "only she's far more pleasant to take than the steam-roller."

"That's a comfort, and, in that case, I think I'd prefer the Mary Benton treatment. And, by the way, I almost forgot to mention that I'll have Guinevere take domestic science."

"To be sure," said he, "there was something said about domestic science. Well, that's still another means of grace."

"You have quite a collection."

"Yes," said he, smiling benevolently, "in assorted sizes and varying degrees of temperature and horse-power."

As Mrs. Smythe approached the door in taking her departure she turned to say, "And, Uncle Danny, should you ever be called upon for a testimonial about your skill as the chauffeur of a steam-roller,

please feel free to give me as a reference. Good night."

"I certainly shall, and thank you very much. Good night."

Scarcely had the door closed when Nick was transformed into a veritable whirlwind. He barked and frisked, and cavorted about in a paroxysm of freedom and joy. When he had finally subsided somewhat Uncle Danny said, "So you feel that way about it, too, do you, Nick? Well, that's just what I would expect of you. You stood the ordeal well, old chap, and your self-mastery helped me through. 'Tis no easy task, Nick, to transmute a counterfeit woman into a real one—but we've made a start, Nick. Let's hope and hope hard. We have vaccinated her with the virus of old-fashioned, every-day common sense, if it only takes—if it only takes."

## CHAPTER IV

### THE BOY

It was one of Uncle Danny's many pleasures in life to climb to the top of Sugar Loaf in pleasant weather and regale himself with the charms of that regal and picturesque eminence. Sugar Loaf is a hill, or a mountain, at your pleasure, that lies at the outskirts of the village and causes the sunrise to be delayed, somewhat, for the villagers. From the vantage-point of its summit one gains a view of an undulating landscape that delights the eye and the soul with its hills and dales, its fruitful fields and orchards, its flocks and herds, and the cozy homes that nestle among the trees. Thither Uncle Danny went to bask in the sunshine, to drink in the pure air, and become oriented, in spirit, in the great oasis of silence. Here with the velvet sky above him and space stretching for miles around and below him he gained perspective and his inner eye saw things as they are. Removed from the moil and toil of civilization, he communed with elemental things, earth and sky, and air. Here Nature, in her balmiest and gentlest mood, kept his soul washed

clean, and here his thoughts could make excursions into the realms of the infinite without interruption.

Of course, Nick always accompanied him wherever he went in his quests for mental and spiritual rehabilitation, for they were inseparables, and each felt lost without the other. As Uncle Danny sat on the wooden bench on the apex of Sugar Loaf, Nick would lie at his feet or else make some independent investigations among the things of nature round about. Often, too, Robert Hilton became the third member of the party, especially on Saturdays or other holidays. Robert was twelve, and lived only a few doors removed from Uncle Danny. Or, rather, his home was only a few doors distant. At this home he took many of his meals and did his sleeping, for the most part, but, truth to tell, he did his living, in large measure, with Uncle Danny. No two boys and no two men could be more congenial, and yet they retained their identity as man and boy. Whenever the three of them assembled at some secluded rendezvous, Uncle Danny said they were holding an executive session. This expression puzzled Robert somewhat, at first, but after Uncle Danny's explanation he entered into the spirit of the enterprise with boyish zest and, thereafter, often importuned Uncle Danny for another executive session. That was the way with Uncle Danny in

his dealings with Robert; he would use a word or an expression just far enough beyond or above the boy to excite his curiosity, but not far enough beyond him to divorce his interest. In this way the boy was ever striving to attain to the man's concept of words and thus to enter into the man's ways of thinking. These facile reactions on the part of Robert were a delight to Uncle Danny and gave piquancy to their executive sessions. The relation that subsisted between these two cronies is convincing proof that two people, even with their disparity of age, may have a complete understanding and a free-masonry that puts each one at his ease in the presence of the other.

They talked together as man to man, as friend to friend. Or they were silent together, as the mood encompassed them, and both understood. Uncle Danny never patronized Robert, and Robert had no fear of Uncle Danny. There was a complete absence of constraint on the part of both in each other's society. Robert might not ascend to Uncle Danny's plane of thinking, at all times, but Uncle Danny could always come to Robert's. One bright morning, in early October, when nature had decked herself in her choicest robes, they sat together on the bench on Sugar Loaf in silent enjoyment of the scene of beauty about them when, at length, Robert

broke the silence with the question, "Uncle Danny, isn't this a good time for an executive session?"

"Well," replied Uncle Danny, "the auspices seem propitious."

"Aha, Uncle Danny, I caught you that time."

"Caught me? Well, I don't feel caught."

"Well, you are, whether you feel like it or not."

"Thou enigmatical scion of Mystery, how am I caught?"

"Why, I know where you read about the auspices being propitious."

"Very well, Solomon, second edition, where did I read it?"

"Why, in *Classic Myths.*"

"Oho! So you've been perusing that self-same volume, have you?"

"Yes, indeedy, and I like it immensely," enthused Robert.

"Well, that's the way for a boy to like such a book as that. But we are wandering from the path. Just why are you asking for an executive session?"

"I wanted to ask you an important question—oh, very important."

"The plot thickens," said Uncle Danny, smiling amiably. "Go ahead, then, Mr. Interlocutor, and propound your very important question."

"What is a liberal education?"

"I don't know."

"You don't know? And you are a professor over in the college!"

"The prisoner at the bar pleads guilty to the charge and throws himself upon the mercy of the court."

"And the court will be kind to him because of his gray hairs and his nice dog," laughed Robert.

"Come alive, Nick. I salute you; I kiss my hand to you. You are certainly a very present help in time of trouble," cried Uncle Danny.

"But, Uncle Danny, I do want to know what a liberal education is. I asked our teacher yesterday, and she told me to ask you. If you can't tell me, I don't know what to do about it. Don't any of the college professors know what it is?"

"Oh, bless you, yes. They all know, or think they do, but they all give different definitions, and each one is certain that his definition is the right one. But tell me, Robert, what set you to thinking about a liberal education?"

"Easy! I've been reading *Sesame and Lilies*, that you let me have."

"Blessed be John Ruskin!" exclaimed Uncle Danny. "A man who can write a book that a twelve-year-old boy likes to read and that his gray-haired Uncle Danny reads again and again, must be a man worth while."

"And do you like it, too, Uncle Danny?"

"I certainly do, and have read it many times. I now clearly see how you came to ask what a liberal education is, and, as you say, it is a very important question. I only wish I could give you a satisfactory answer."

"But, Uncle Danny, don't you know any answers to the question?"

"Yes, indeed, scores of them."

"What are 'scores,' Uncle Danny?"

"Why, a score is twenty, Robert."

"So, then, you know forty, or sixty, answers to that question?"

"You certainly do shine in the realm of multiplication. Yes, I suppose I could give you sixty answers to your question."

"Well, if you know so many, I think you might spare a boy one of them. I'll not tell, if you want to keep it a secret."

"I can't just say that any of my answers could be called secrets, but your teacher and the college professors might smile if they should hear some of them."

"Try one of them on me, anyhow, Uncle Danny," urged Robert.

"All right, young man, since you insist: 'A liberal education is an influence that causes people to change their minds.' "

"But, Uncle Danny, I—well—why——"

"Yes, that's just the way those college professors would think of it, too."

"But, Uncle Danny, that seems such an easy answer. All a fellow has to do is to change his mind and he has a liberal education."

"Hold your horses there, Robert Hilton; the team is running off! I didn't say that at all. I said that a liberal education is an influence that causes people to do something. You have the cart before the horse."

"All right, Uncle Danny. Won't you hitch the horse up right, then?"

"All right, Sir Pertinacity; if I must be a hostler, I'll try to get this team going the way teams should go. You tell me you have been reading *Classic Myths* and *Sesame and Lilies*. Very well, what books did you read a year or two years ago?"

"Why Alger and Henty."

"Why aren't you reading their books now?"

"Because I've—oh, I see, I've changed my mind."

"Good! Dear sir, you are smarter than you look."

"You're not."

"Wake up, there, Nick! Robert is saying things."

"But, really, Uncle Danny, I think I do see what you mean. I didn't like history, at first, but I do

like it now. That shows I've changed my mind, doesn't it?"

"That's the big idea, and the more often you change your mind in that way the faster you will travel toward a liberal education. But I suggest that we now recess for half an hour to stretch our legs, make some discoveries, if possible, and give Nick a chance to locate a chipmunk. He'll grow stale if he doesn't take some exercise in pursuit of wild beasts."

So they went their several ways, to negotiate whatever enterprises might fall out.

When Robert finally returned he found that Uncle Danny and Nick had preceded him, and when he would have explained his tardiness Uncle Danny reassured him and gave him to understand that when we are deeply interested in any enterprise the clock seems to get in a hurry. He then very artfully reached the conclusion that, if the teachers would but contrive some compelling interest, there would be fewer tardy pupils. Then, quite abruptly, he asked, "And what discoveries did you make, Robert?"

"Oh, I had a lot of fun, and I saw thirteen birds, and one was a red-bird, a scarlet—what do you call it?"

"Tanager."

"Yes, thank you, scarlet tanager. Isn't he a beauty?"

"He is, indeed. But I saw only twelve birds; so you beat me in the bird-game."

"But, Uncle Danny, one of my birds was a hawk that was sailing about up in the sky. You ought to look up more."

"'Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings,'" quoted Uncle Danny. "Quite right, Robert, and I feel properly rebuked. Of course, we all ought to look up more, and we miss a lot of things because we keep looking down. But I see you found some flowers, too."

"Yes, sir; they played hide-and-seek with me and I said 'I spy' and gathered some to take home with me. But, Uncle Danny, my biggest discovery was that you are an influence."

"Hooray! I can't think of anything I'd rather be."

"Why, Uncle Danny, I thought you'd rather be Professor of Greek and Latin than anything."

"Not a bit of it! I'd rather be an influence than a professor of a dozen languages. Why, Robert, Influence is the main tent and Greek and Latin are only the side-show. I work in the side-show so as to have a free pass to the main tent, for there's where the big work is done."

"But that sounds like circus talk, Uncle Danny."

"The analogy does great credit to your perspicacity, my son."

"Uncle Danny, aren't you having one of those spasms of English language that you say I have sometimes?"

"Yes, I confess to a momentary mental aberration. I was just taking a little flight in my airship."

"Don't do it, Uncle Danny. You might stretch your suspenders. Don't do it—not ever."

"Very well, Sir Censor, or Sponsor, or Nestor. I'll try to refrain, or abstain, as you will. But now I am curious to learn how you discovered that I am an influence."

"It was this way: While I was counting the birds and playing with the flowers I got to thinking about what you said a liberal education is. And, all at once it popped into my mind that you are an influence because you cause people to change their minds."

"Robert, my boy, you are a logician."

"A what?" asked Robert.

"Well, never mind about that; but you are one anyhow, and it is nothing to be ashamed of. But what people have I caused to change their minds?"

"I'm one of them."

"You? Explain yourself, will you?"

"Well, you see, Uncle Danny, if I hadn't read

*Freckles* and *The Girl of the Limberlost* I wouldn't have seen all those birds and flowers to-day. You let me have those books, so, you see, you caused me to change my mind."

"Well, if that's the way a change of mind works, I'm in favor of it."

"So am I. But, Uncle Danny, I wish you'd cause mama to change her mind."

"In what way?" asked Uncle Danny, with an air of caution.

"So she'd read the kind of books you let me have."

"Doesn't she?"

"No, sir. She picked up *Sesame and Lilies* the other night, but put it down pretty soon and said she couldn't make heads nor tails of it."

"What does she read?"

"She's reading a book named *Graustark*. Mrs. Smythe let her have it and she told mama that Guinevere says it is positively grand."

"Oh, ye superlative Smythes!"

"What does that mean, Uncle Danny?"

"It means, my son, that your Uncle Danny forgets, and talks to himself, sometimes. These spells don't come upon him often, and there is really no cause for alarm."

"Oh, all right. And, Uncle Danny, I wish mama would let me have a dog."

"Well, why not?"

"She says a dog litters up the house, and she just won't have one around. She says a boy is enough bother without having a dog, too. Why, she won't let me go into the parlor, because, she says, she wants to keep it in order for the company."

"Um, I see."

"When I go home from school, she's hardly ever there, and if I had a dog it wouldn't be so lonesome."

"Um, I see."

"You know she goes to some club meeting or something about every day."

"Um, I see. But, Robert, you know that Nick and I are always glad to have you come over to stay with us when you get lonesome."

"Yes, I know. But mama says I spend too much time over at your house. She says I seem to like you more than I do her."

"Um, I see. Well, I suspect we'd better be trotting along home, now. It is not far from time for lunch, and your mama might not like it if you are late."

"I should say not," replied Robert with emphasis.

On the following Saturday, the weather still being fine, the three of them went on their final fishing trip to the lake some miles away. Mrs. Hilton readily assented to the arrangement, saying that some social duties would keep her from home most

of the day and that Robert was such a trial on Saturdays anyhow. No sooner had they alighted from the trolley-car at the lake than Uncle Danny secured a boat with a broad bottom, stipulating that two pairs of oars should be supplied. Robert watched these preliminary arrangements with keen interest but without comment for he had come to feel that Uncle Danny does all things well. After two or three hours of successful fishing, Uncle Danny suggested that some lunch might not come amiss, and pointed out a nice place on the opposite shore for the purpose. Then ensued Robert's first lesson in rowing, and the second pair of oars was fully explained. Seated behind Uncle Danny he heeded his instructions and copied his movements, as best he could, so that as they were nearing the shore Robert was able to propel the boat alone.

The large basket, which accompanied them, provided an ample supply of cooking utensils and things edible, and very soon a fire was blazing in the midst of stones that, somehow, under Uncle Danny's management had got themselves into just the right position and the frying pan was soon doing its appointed work. Robert did his full share of the work of dressing the fish, slicing the bread, and opening the cans. There was a generous bottle of milk for Robert, and, of course, jelly, with a crown-

piece of sugared cookies at the close. When the dishes had been washed and the basket repacked they sat about the fire for a time in silence that betokened satisfaction with mundane affairs. Then Uncle Danny suggested a game of catch.

"But, we haven't a ball," objected Robert.

"Oh, yes, we have," said Uncle Danny, and his pocket yielded one forth.

When the game began to pall upon Robert, Uncle Danny was quick to note the fact and suggested that he himself had had enough ball for one day. So, flushed with the exercise, they resumed the log from which lunch had been served. Presently, Robert asked, "Uncle Danny, do you think the auspices are propitious for another executive session?"

"Oh, thou source of sesquipedalian English undefiled!" laughed Uncle Danny. "Of course, never a better time nor a fitter place. So, what will the seeker after knowledge have at this session?"

"I'd like to hear some more of your sixty definitions of a liberal education."

"Did I say sixty?"

"Yes, sir; sixty."

"Oh, prodigious Memory! Thy name is Robert Hilton! Why, boy, you are like another conscience in keeping a fellow reminded of things. Well, then, here's another one: 'A liberal education is a means

of preventing a person from thinking of himself as superfluous.' "

"Look here, Nick, do you understand what Uncle Danny is saying? I don't."

"Aha! I thought I'd hook you on that one. Well, let me try to pulverize it a bit. Superfluous means something that is left out, or left over, something that isn't needed. If you have ever been around where people were talking of things you didn't understand, you must have felt that you were not needed, that you were superfluous."

"Oh, I see. Yes, I felt that way the other day when mama and a lot of ladies were talking about making dresses, and what kind of trimming they were going to have for their hats, and such talk as that. I felt so superfluous that I went right over to see you, and you gave me that Baldwin book *Fifty Famous Riders*. My! I do like that book."

"So do I."

"Did you read it, too? Do you read every book you let me take?"

"Why, of course."

"But why?"

"Because I like to read good books, and because I want to learn what books you'll enjoy."

"Uncle Danny, you're good to me. I wish papa would be like you. He doesn't seem to care what I

read, and he wouldn't have taught me how to row the boat to-day, nor how to build a camp-fire. He never did play catch with me, and we have never had an executive session. He always says he's too busy. I wish he wouldn't be so busy, so I do."

"Um, I see. But let me presume to resume. You see, if you are not to feel superfluous, you must know what people are talking and writing about. If you don't know your history, and hear people talking of history, you'll feel superfluous. If you go to a concert and don't understand music, you'll feel superfluous. If you go to an art gallery and don't understand pictures, you'll feel superfluous."

"I see it, Uncle Danny, I see it," exclaimed Robert in tones of triumph. "Then I'll have to know everything, won't I?" he added more reflectively.

"Well, that's a large contract, but your education would certainly be liberal. But, let us walk down to the beach where I can use the sand as a blackboard. Well, here we are. You see here a circle whose diameter is two inches. That means that the circumference is something more than six inches, for you must multiply the diameter by three, plus, to get the circumference or the distance around it. Here I draw another circle six inches in diameter. What is the circumference of this one?"

"Eighteen inches and more."

"Right you are. Here's one ten inches in diameter."

"Thirty."

"Right again. Now, if I were to draw one a hundred inches in diameter, then what?"

"Three hundred."

"Quite right. Now, if the circle represents what a person knows and the space outside the circle is what he doesn't know, you find that the more he knows the longer becomes the line of things he doesn't know. When you know a circle six inches in diameter the unknown line is eighteen inches; but when you know a circle a hundred inches in diameter, the line of unknown is three hundred."

"Oh, I see. The more you know, the more you find out you don't know. Is that it?"

"Exactly. Only, the more you know the more you wish to make your circle larger."

"Oh, yes, you want to catch the fish out in the unknown and pull them into the boat with the other things you know?"

"Good! That's better than I could have done. Yes, that's just it."

"Gee, Uncle Danny, I'm going to be busy."

"How's that?"

"Why, I have so many fish that I must pull in."

"Do you know their names?"

"Yes, I know quite a few of them. There's *Chris and His Wonderful Lamp, Captains Courageous, Stories of Thrift, Hans Brinker* and then, you know, you told me that you have those other two *History Stories of Other Lands,* and Howard Pyle's books, *Robin Hood* and *King Arthur*—oh, what a lot of fish."

"Perfectly good fish, too," said Uncle Danny, "and quite anxious to be caught. But you must not forget the Barbour books, *The Beach Patrol, For the Honor of the School, Behind the Line,* and the rest of them."

"Yes, and there's *Rab and His Friends* and *Bob, Son of Battle*—I mustn't leave them out. Say, Uncle Danny, I've got to keep fishing, haven't I?"

"Well, you have the whole winter before you, and you can catch a big string of fish in one winter. There are such fine fish as *Quentin Durward, Kenilworth, The Tale of Two Cities, Kidnapped,* and *Great Expectations* all waiting to be caught. Besides, these fish are quite tame and will stay right near the boat. There's another good thing about all this fishing. The boat is a magic one and grows larger every time you land another fish."

"Do you think, Uncle Danny, that my boat might grow to be a hundred-inch one?"

"Certainly, if you keep right on with your fish-

ing. But, now, methinks it is high time this expedition were making ready for the return voyage."

When they parted at Uncle Danny's front gate, Robert frankly shook hands and said, "Uncle Danny, we've had a fine time, to-day. You are good to me. Good night."

"Yes, we have had a good day together, Robert; and I hope we may have many others just as good. I hope the fishing may be good this evening. Good night."

A few days later as Uncle Danny emerged from his home going up the hill to the college to meet his classes, he encountered Mr. Hilton and they sauntered along together in amiable conversation. After a time Mr. Hilton said, apropos of nothing, "Uncle Danny, I want you to know how grateful I am for all you are doing for my boy, Robert. He's a fine chap, and I feel that you are doing more for him than his own father."

"To me that sounds very like a confession," was the reply.

"Yes, it does sound so, but, you see, my time is so taken up with my business—"

"Oh, business!" Uncle Danny interrupted. "That seems to be sufficiently elastic to cover a multitude of sins. I can't think of any item of your business that is comparable to that boy. And yet you put him

off with the scraps and leavings of your time and energy. You think him a fine boy, and so he is. You take pride in him, and with good warrant. But, did you ever stop to consider whether he takes pride in his father, whether he thinks you the best father a boy could possibly have? If you had a picture of yourself as he thinks of you, do you think you'd keep it hanging above your desk alongside of his?"

"Why, Uncle Danny, I never thought of that."

"No, of course not; and, in that respect, you are a typical American father. You men think your sons ought to worship you simply because you are their fathers. You bring them into the world and then rush off to business and leave them to their own devices, or farm them out to a nurse, or a relative, or some neighbor. I suspect I know far more about Robert's school work, the books he reads, and the games he enjoys than his father. I know his teacher and often talk with her about his work, and the chances are you do not know her when you see her, possibly, not even her name."

"But, Uncle Danny, you must realize that all my hard work is done in Robert's interests."

"Nonsense! Not a bit of it! You delude yourself into that notion, just as thousands of other men are doing, but it is the merest fiction. You have a reputation as a successful business man, but,

by your own confession, you do not manage your business. On the contrary, you let it manage you in such a way that you have no time to give to your own child. Do you ever play games with him? No. Do you ever read books with him? No. Do you ever take rambles with him? No. Do you ever talk with him? No. Oh, you talk to him and at him, but never with him. You expect him to get your point of view, but you make no effort to get his. You set yourself aloft on a pedestal of fatherhood and expect him to burn incense before you. And when he doesn't you think of him as an ingrate, and probably tell him so."

"Say, Uncle Danny, you are talking pretty straight, aren't you?"

"Well, you know a straight line is the shortest distance between two points, and, seeing that I'm aiming at a definite point I find no occasion for circumlocution. I love your boy and regret to see you lose him. But you are losing him—and that because you are pushing him away from you. The very reason he and I have become such good chums is that you never chum with him and a boy will inevitably gravitate to the person who will make a chum of him. So, he has the run of our home, and our furniture is not so valuable that we fear he may mar it. He knows where the cooky-jar is, too,

and feels free to improve the opportunities that it offers."

"Uncle Danny, do you think it is too late for me to win Robert back?"

"By no manner of means."

"How would you advise that I go about it?"

"Get him a nice dog."

"But, Uncle Danny, possibly you don't understand—"

"Yes, I do, I understand fully. But, get him a dog."

"In humility, I thank you, Uncle Danny. And now, if you'll excuse me I'll go back to the house and walk to school with Robert, so as to make the acquaintance of his teacher."

"Good idea! Capital!"

# CHAPTER V

## THE COLLEGE PROFESSOR

DOCTOR THEODORE DUNLEVY came at the opening of the college year as the new professor of educational psychology in the Department of Education. His advent had been foretold in all the college publications and the fact that he had just completed his doctorate at Harvard was duly set forth with laudatory embellishments. There could be no doubt in the mind of any one as to his preeminent fitness for the work to which he had been called, for his doctorate from Harvard set him apart in the thinking of all who had, in any manner, been apprised of his coming. It seemed nothing short of remarkable that one of his years should have attained such heights of scholastic eminence. It is not strange, therefore, that prior to his arrival, he had been invested with almost superhuman attributes. Nor is it strange that the entire college circle was all agog to catch a glimpse of him when the day of his arrival finally came. The ladies of the faculty circle were inclined to lionize him somewhat and so emphasized in his consciousness the cordiality of his

reception. In this atmosphere of cordiality he felt that he had reached the goal of his endeavors, and that his years of diligent study were producing rich fruitage.

He felt more than ever that the achieving of his doctorate had been well worth while since it had proved to be his passport into such an amiable environment and his letters home brimmed with enthusiastic self-gratulation. He was specially pleased to have the title "Doctor" applied to him by all the college people and became expansive in the secret contemplation of the impressive dignity with which the recognition of his title seemed to invest him. The reputation which had preceded him and the laudation which had been bestowed upon him throughout the college circle had influenced many students to elect his courses so as to give themselves the benefit of his large erudition and his brilliant qualities. Mothers gently but firmly counseled their daughters to modify their previous plans so as to join his classes for, they argued, we must all do our utmost to show the Doctor that we recognize and appreciate genius in this college.

During the progress of these events that stimulated college affairs to an unusual degree, Uncle Danny, Nick at his heels, pursued his accustomed ways, with his usual air of urbanity and serenity.

The coming of the learned Doctor did not, in the least, disturb the balance of Uncle Danny, nor yet his equipoise. He met the Doctor frequently on the campus or in the corridors and always gave him a gracious salutation. But it was evident that after one of these meetings the Doctor never once thought of Uncle Danny until they met again. Then he would greet him casually, and somewhat perfunctorily, as if he were in haste to be somewhere else.

In time, however, the Doctor became conscious of Nick as a vague and somewhat insidious disturbing element. And his final consciousness of Nick led him to reason from the dog to the man. Somehow, the pair of them could not be made to fit into his preconceptions of a college community. They seemed to be an element of alloy in his academic concept. Their presence in the college or on the campus seemed an academic incongruity. There was a puzzle in it all, if not a mystery. The people who had received him so royally accepted or, at least, tolerated this peculiar man and his no less peculiar dog. It was all quite inexplicable. The more he pondered it the more bewildered he became. He knew, of course, that Uncle Danny was a full professor and that fact accentuated his perplexity. Could it be, he thought, that some wealthy relative

had endowed the chair which Uncle Danny held on condition that he should be made a professor and become the beneficiary of the endowment fund? Could the college be in such sore straits for funds that they must, perforce, barter away its dignity and do violence to academic standards? He felt that it wasn't fair to him to be classed with a man whose status seemed to be so vague and nebulous. However, finding no means ready to hand by which he might solve the situation that so perplexed him, he determined to proceed with his work and let time become the solvent. But, as the weeks passed, time seemed to be playing some trick with him and he became more and more deeply involved in the labyrinth and no Ariadne had furnished him a clue. He found that not only the college people but also the towns-people treated Uncle Danny with affectionate reverence. On the street and in the shops people spoke of Uncle Danny as an institution and not at all as a mere member of the human family.

Uncle Danny was quite unconscious of the perturbed state of the Doctor's mind and proceeded with his teaching of the humanities while Nick took a siesta or moved about the room as inclination dictated. Some of the students seemed envious of Nick in his freedom to wander off into dreamland at will, but Uncle Danny had a large assortment of antidotes

for somnolence which he used so effectively that these students took counsel with discretion rather than propensity. On one occasion the Doctor stopped for a moment at the door of Uncle Danny's room to note the evident interest on the part of the students in the work that was forward. He had really expected to find the young people looking bored and uncomfortable. Instead, he found them altogether alert and responsive. In fact, they seemed eager to make contributions to the work in hand, whereas his own students seemed ill at ease, even when he rose to sublime heights of eloquence in setting forth for their delectation the profundities of educational psychology. And there was the omnipresent Nick, too, sleeping in peace and the students apparently unconscious of his presence. How, he asked himself, could such things be? Should a dog enter his own room there would ensue, he felt certain, a general uproar and the dog would incontinently retreat before a shower of missiles. Can it be possible, he ruminated, that my lot has been cast among plebeians when I was so certain that they are patricians?

So it came to pass, as months went by, that he reluctantly reached the conclusion that no one but Uncle Danny could solve the riddle which had become an obsession. But even this conclusion af-

forded him small comfort, for he had been at no pains to learn the avenue of approach to the man whom the entire populace seemed to hold in the highest esteem. Besides, Nick was another barrier. He felt that he could not hold with a man who made a dog a sort of adjunct professor of Greek and Latin. He shuddered. He had made a few attempts to gain from people of the village an explanation of Uncle Danny and usually asked why he was so popular, and, invariably, received the reply, "Why, because he is Uncle Danny." This answer was given with a finality that served to interdict further interrogation.

Hence, it fell out that he must call upon Uncle Danny or become so hopelessly enmeshed in his perplexity that he could hope for no extrication. Indeed, Uncle Danny had become such a deep problem that the subjects he had studied in pursuit of his doctorate seemed mild by comparison. Then it dawned upon him that he might be of service to Uncle Danny in the way of causing him to aspire to a higher plane of dignity and a larger recognition of academic standards. This thought redeemed the prospective visit from some of its darker aspects. Yes, he would go in the true missionary spirit and as a harbinger of light. However, he took the precaution to go under cover of darkness, as did Nico-

demus before him, so as to avert any unpleasant comments. Uncle Danny might be a very pleasant old gentleman who had ingratitated himself with the people by his long residence among them, but it was just as well to exercise due caution for he had the dignity of his doctorate to maintain.

Uncle Danny greeted his visitor with unfeigned cordiality but with no slightest trace of sycophancy. Indeed, he was so much at ease in the presence of the Doctor as to indicate that he experienced no abashment when scholastic dignity crossed his threshold. His easy grace and complete self-possession disconcerted the Doctor somewhat for he had fully expected that his advent would create something of a stir, if not an actual flutter, in the usual order. But nothing happened. Nick slept right on as if he, too, were quite accustomed to distinguished guests. The peace and serenity of his surroundings had the effect of dampening the Doctor's missionary ardor and he wondered how he was to broach the subjects that impelled his visit. So, having given due consideration to the topics of weather and general health, he finally decided to make the plunge into his major theme taking Nick as a text or perhaps, rather, as a pretext.

"Uncle Danny," said he, "I see that your dog is as faithful to you at home as he is at the college."

"Oh, yes," replied Uncle Danny, "tenacity of purpose is one of his strong points. Besides, he is so cosmopolitan in his tastes that it is all one to him whether he is here or at the college. He seems to know how to adapt himself to his environment, provided that I am a part of the environment. He seems to say with Ruth 'Whither thou goest I will go.' "

"I think I hardly follow you," said the Doctor.

"Likely not," replied Uncle Danny.

"It is rather a new experience to me to find a dog attending college classes."

"Probably. But new experiences may prove of value."

"Well, er—yes—I suppose so. But doesn't the presence of a dog interfere with sequential thinking in your classes?"

"The best reply I can make to your question is to quote what the man said when he looked for the first time upon a giraffe, 'They ain't no sich animal.' "

"What!" exclaimed the Doctor. "No sequential thinking in our classes? Do you mean to say that my students may be thinking of irrelevant matters while I am proclaiming and elucidating the foundation principles of psychology?"

"I can conceive that such a thing might happen, even in such circumstances."

"Montrous! But of what would they be thinking, if not of psychology?"

"Well, as to that," was the reply as Uncle Danny apparently winked in Nick's direction, "the boys might be thinking of the girls, the girls of the boys, and all of them might be thinking of parties, ice-cream, foot-ball, or how to delude you into believing that they were intensely interested in your profound observations."

"I think, Uncle Danny, that I hardly follow you."

"Likely not. But your students would if they were here."

"You know, I dare say, that I achieved my doctorate at Harvard?"

"Yes, I gathered that from what I saw in the public print."

"Yes, they were kind enough to set out my scholastic attainments at some length, and I deeply appreciate the courtesy. But I was about to observe that, in all the time I was at Harvard, I do not recall that I ever remarked the presence of a dog in one of the classes."

"That may well be; but, even at that, I do not wholly despair of those Harvard chaps. I still have hopes."

"Really, Uncle Danny, I think I do not follow you."

"Likely not."

"But," persisted the Doctor, "I should think that the presence of a dog in the class-room would militate against discipline."

"Oh, discipline. Well, if the discipline in my room were so precarious that Nick would throw it out of balance, I'd think I was due for a season of meditation and prayer."

"Let me say once again, Uncle Danny, that I think I hardly follow you."

"Likely not."

"The fact is, Uncle Danny, we do not seem to be getting on very fast or very far in our conference."

"Oh, I don't know. I'm enjoying myself."

"Yes, I suppose it must relieve the monotony to have some one drop in of an evening."

"Oh, quite so," drawled Uncle Danny.

The Doctor paused for a time as if for a re-alignment of his forces or for the bringing forward of his reserves. Or he may have been trying to fathom some of the cryptic remarks in which Uncle Danny had indulged. But, quite undaunted, he rallied to the attack and presently asked: "Uncle Danny, I wonder if it has occurred to you to aspire to one of the higher degrees?"

"Oh, bless your life, Doctor, I have so many degrees now that I don't know what to do with them."

"You haven't, by any chance, achieved a doctorate, have you?"

"Oh, mercy, yes, I have enough doctorates around here somewhere to fit me out as the manager of a hospital, with a veterinary annex."

"Why, you astound me, I had no idea."

"Likely not."

"You have studied at Harvard, then?"

"No."

"Not? Then where did you win your doctorate?"

"Heidelberg."

"What! Heidelberg? In Germany?"

"Yes."

"And you studied at Heidelberg?"

"Obviously."

"So, you have been across the water?"

"Obviously."

"Why, really, I am amazed."

"You mean because I crossed the ocean or because I managed to get back?"

"You are pleased to be facetious, perhaps?" asked the Doctor.

"Not to any great extent. But I am curious to learn whether your astonishment is due to the fact that I have traveled abroad, that I have a Ph. D. degree, or to your previous conception of me."

"Well," said the Doctor, "to be perfectly frank,

my previous conception of you did not connect you either with a doctorate or with foreign travel. But let me be bold enough to inquire what other degrees you hold."

"I'll tell you, but what I say must be held in the strictest confidence. I am a Doctor of Laws and a Doctor of Divinity; but I find it difficult to live up to any of my degrees, and I can't make out why they ever thrust such encumbrances upon me."

"Really, Uncle Danny, I seem not to be able to get your point of view."

"Possibly I may be able to assist you. I have such a profound regard for scholarship that I would save it from the fate of undue advertising. If my scholarship must have a label or a tag attached to it to render it visible I'd feel that I ought to go back to Heidelberg and get more of it so that it might become evident by its own inherent quality. Some people seem to think it necessary to have their luggage plastered over with hotel labels as an evidence that they have traveled abroad. To me it seems a sort of confession that they feel they must advertise in order to make it evident that they have traveled. They seem to be trying to indicate a subjective experience by an objective symbol, and hope to compel recognition whereas the subjective experience should

be of such a nature and quality as to impel recognition."

"Uncle Danny, you certainly use words with apt discrimination."

"That's what words are for."

"And your philosophy impresses me greatly."

"That's what philosophy is for."

"In all you have been saying you seem to be holding a mirror up before me."

"That's what a mirror is for."

"At any rate, Uncle Danny, by the aid of your mirror I seem to be winning your point of view not to mention any modifications of my own; and I shall be glad to hear you elucidate your philosophy of education still further."

"Really, Doctor, your attitude does you credit and encourages me. Well, then, as I said before, degrees are well enough when they betoken scholarship that is self-evident. In that case, there is no occasion to exploit the degrees. We have been so long saying that knowledge is power that we have come to believe it."

"What! Knowledge not power?"

"Not a bit of it! Knowledge is merely potential. It is useful as an agency in generating power, but that is when it is at work. Knowledge in cold stor-

age is never power. Gasoline is an inert substance, but set it to work and we derive power. All these degrees that you and I have are mere exponents of things that are potential. They are merely marching orders, but, if we refuse to march, they become non-effective and misleading."

"Well, Uncle Danny, you and I are certainly marching."

"Perhaps; but we must be quite certain that we are marching in the right direction, else our degrees become worse than futile. Some people think they are marching when they are merely in motion."

"Ah, a nice distinction!"

"Yes, and a distinction that is as true as it is nice."

"But, I never thought of that before."

"That proves, then, that at length we are making headway in our conference this evening."

"Headway! Indeed, yes. I feel as if I were being dragged three times around the walls at the tail of Uncle Danny's chariot."

"Good; Doctor, you are coming on. Your knowledge is becoming power."

"Due entirely to the skill of your teaching."

"Thank you. But, now that you speak of teaching, there are two phases of that work that need emphasis, and, perhaps, re-statement. All of us

teachers are great sinners and need forty-horse-power repentance. We seem not to be able to get away from the American notion of show and parade. We want to attach a medal, or a banner, or a credit, or a degree to every phase of the truth we try to teach. We want all our work to be labeled as exhibits and thus seem to doubt the power of the work to proclaim itself, to make itself manifest. We often extol the simple truth and yet try to deck it out in frills and furbelows, making it seem anything but simple. Parenthetically, I have often wondered why you psychologists do not learn to speak the English language. It is a good language and lends itself readily to the expression of thought."

"So much I have already had occasion to observe this evening," replied the Doctor with a significant smile.

"Very well. If it can perform that function in this room, it can do the same in any class-room in the college."

"But, Uncle Danny, the psychologists have conceived the notion that their technical terms are more impressive."

"Fiddle-strings! They'd better be trying to become expressive. If they do that their students will take good care of the impressive part of the game. Many a professor has got himself laughed

at by his students because he had more sail than ballast. He was impressive but he wouldn't care to wear on his watch-charm the impression he made on the minds of his students."

"I'm wondering, Uncle Danny, if any of my students have ever spoken to you of the impression my work makes upon them?"

"Doctor, wouldn't it be better to confine ourselves to the impersonal plane?"

"It can not be done, for I have been on the personal plane for the past half hour. What you have been saying has such a direct bearing upon my own work that I find it impossible not to make a personal application."

"Doctor, you challenge my profound admiration and I'll meet you half-way by telling you, man to man, that your students often talk to me of you and your work. They say you know your subject but do not succeed in getting them to know it. They say your work is a sorry waste of perfectly good knowledge. As they express it, you fail to 'put it across.'"

"Wait a minute, Uncle Danny. Let the prisoner at the bar say a word in his own behalf. If I place the right kind of food on the table before them, isn't it their responsibility to take it or leave it?"

"Thank you, Doctor, for a very pat illustration.

Not by any means. We teachers are charged with the responsibility of placing the food before our students, as a matter of course, but we have the further responsibility of setting it out in such an alluring way that they must partake. We must make them hungry for our kind of food—make their mouths water for it, as it were. Our first business is to get their minds wide open. Your own psychology teaches that students must react to our offerings else they make no acquisitions of knowledge. Their reactions are their expression and their expression must precede and condition impression."

"Hold! Hold!" cried the Doctor. "Talk about a man's being hoist by his own petard, I now know what that means by experience. I am getting a valuable lesson in applied psychology. Here I've been condemning my students for inattention, when, in truth, I have not been giving them what would impel attention."

"You state the case with great clearness, Doctor, and I confidently predict that hereafter manner of presentation will share the honors with matter."

"I hope to justify your prediction, Uncle Danny, for I now think I can interpret your thought to mean that an academic degree is not a reliable index of teaching power."

"Just so, and I thank you for thus anticipating

me. We have been proceeding upon the agreeable assumption that if a man is thoroughly conversant with a subject, he can teach it. Experience has shown this assumption to be a fallacy, and hence the establishment of your own department of education."

"And I have been violating the very principle upon which our department is based."

"Far be it from me to say as much as that; but, be that as it may, it is but the truth to say that every teacher in a department of education should be an expert in the art of teaching. And, as you say, an academic degree does not prove that a man is an expert teacher. It proves that he has knowledge, but it does not prove that he knows how to use that knowledge so as to generate power. In short, it does not prove that he knows how to teach. That's just what I meant when I expressed some doubt as to my ability to live up to my degrees."

"I see the whole matter quite clearly, Uncle Danny, and my much exploited and advertised doctorate must stand the test of the class-room. Well, just now the poor thing seems the worse for wear, and its content seems to need a generous replenishment."

"And it will get it, too, or I'm no judge of men. But, Doctor, we need another college and another

degree in this country. We need a college in which to train men and women, who have their academic degrees, for positions in our colleges of education and normal schools; and we need the degree to confer upon such persons when they have acquired such skill as teachers as will enable them to acquit themselves worthily in such positions."

"So we do! So we do! And I hereby nominate Uncle Danny as president of the new college and I solemnly enroll as the first student if I must hypothecate my life-insurance and my dress-suit to raise the necessary funds. Uncle Danny, I'm a convert and bear glad testimony to your power as an evangelist. The scales have fallen from my eyes, and I now see. Henceforth, I shall emulate your example and try to the utmost of my ability to live and work up to my degree."

"Doctor, I have always contended that it is possible to make something of a Ph. D. man if you can only catch him while he is young. But, let me say sincerely, that you have surpassed my fondest hopes, and almost embarrass me by your eagerness to discard the mere husks so as to arrive at the rich kernel. You are so open-minded, and so intelligently responsive to right appeals that you have already set yourself apart in my affectionate admiration and I predict for you a noble career in the work of teach-

ing. I am more glad for this evening than I can well express and I now know as never before that the Department of Education has in you a real man as well as a scholar, and, in my thinking, the man always has first place."

"Uncle Danny, you overwhelm me with your kindness, and I have no words in which I can fitly and adequately express my gratitude. If degrees could express progress I feel that I ought to have another degree to indicate the advance I have made because of the rich experience of this evening. I can only say I thank you. And, Uncle Danny, I think better of dogs now than ever before. Do you think it might be well for me to get one of my own?"

"By all means! The very thing! Get a dog! Good night!"

## CHAPTER VI

### TWO GIRLS

"MARY," said Guinevere Smythe as they sat talking in Mary's private room, "I'm wondering whether you are as fond of Tom Foster as he is of you."

"Why, Guinevere. whatever put that into your head?"

"Oh, I was just thinking."

"A practise to be heartily commended, provided the subject of the thinking is worthy, and, possibly, relevant."

"In this case, it is both, or I'm mistaken," said Guinevere.

"Very well, then. But even if I concede the worthiness, the relevancy needs explanation."

"Well, there you sit, and you explain both the worthiness and the relevancy."

"Oho, so you are making the matter quite personal."

"It is personal without any of my making."

"Well," said Mary, "I seem to be on the witness-stand willy nilly, and may as well make the best of it. I might quibble about your definition of the

word 'fond' which you are bound to admit is a very elastic term. As to how fond Tom is of me, I'm not adequately informed."

"No fault of his, or I don't know Tom Foster. Hasn't he ever tried to tell you?"

"Oh, dear, yes; many a time, but I always manage to shunt him off to some siding for purposes of my own."

"And those purposes?"

"Guinevere, you should be a lawyer. You certainly are an expert in the art of cross-questioning. Well, I don't mind telling you, but in confidence, that I am making a study of Thomas Foster. In fact, I'm honoring him with a much closer scrutiny than he is aware of, and, to do that, I am keeping him at a distance that I may gain a perspective."

"Mary Benton, if you are not already a philosopher, you soon will be. You must be one already seeing that I don't, in the least, know what you are talking about."

"Oh, very well, Miss Barrister; you are entitled to a fuller explanation, since you are so keen on the subject. I must know Tom far better than I now do before I can permit my heart to become involved. I'm giving my head the right of way just now, with my heart in the background."

"What more can you possibly want to know about

him? You know he is handsome, popular, rich, an excellent student, and that his father will take him into the firm as soon as he has completed his college course."

"Oh, yes, all that," Mary replied.

"Isn't that enough?"

"By no means."

"Well, what more do you want to know?"

"Why, I must know Tom Foster."

"You do know him, you have just said so."

"Oh, not at all. I admitted all the facts that you adduced, but they are only externals."

"Well, I suppose you want to know the internal Tom Foster."

"Exactly."

"But, Mary, you must know that there are a half-dozen girls who would snap him up in a minute merely on the score of externals."

"I dare say your surmises are correct, but, for that very reason, among others, I am the more careful."

"But I don't see what that has to do with the case."

"Let me try to explain. You know there is an adage to the effect that there is more pleasure in pursuit than in possession. These girls you speak of are quite as attractive as I am, and more so, to my

thinking, but it is just possible that my reluctance to meet Tom half-way, or more, has caused me to seem all the more desirable. You know that human nature yearns for the unattainable. Possibly he has set me up on a sort of pedestal because I hold myself somewhat aloof."

"I never thought of that view; but it may be the true one."

"Yes," said Mary, "he may think the ground on which I stand is enchanted ground simply because I have a barrier about it that he can not get over. But, if I were to open the gate for him, he might reach the conclusion that there is no enchantment after all and that mere pursuit gave zest to the game."

"But, Mary, think of all his money!"

"Oh, money! That's another obstacle."

"Obstacle? You can't mean it."

"But I do. There's only one thing connected with money that he knows anything about and that is how to spend it. He never earned a dollar in his life, so far as I have been able to learn, but he can spend it fast enough. Besides, I'm not for sale."

"Why, Mary, you're getting in dead earnest."

"Earnest? Indeed yes. I'm not certain, as yet, that money isn't weakening Tom's fiber. He is petted and pampered at home, and has far more

money than is good for him—so much, indeed, that a whole bevy of girls in this town are using it and him for their own pleasure. Now, he has come to think that he can have any of those girls for the asking, and, as you say, it is probably true."

"But, Mary, you certainly don't object to money, do you?"

"Not if there is a man along. But if I must choose between a man and mere money, I'll take the man every time. If he is a real man the money question will solve itself."

"I wonder what you mean by a real man."

"Well, for one thing, I do not mean a tailor-made creation, that disdains honest work, and is willing to have his parents toil and slave that he may simper, and pose, and flirt, and ogle susceptible girls, and pretend to be what he is not. The man I marry must have good red blood, he must be genuine through and through, he must appreciate the value of a dollar, and he must have the right kind of a great-grandfather."

"Great-grandfather! And are you going to marry his great-grandfather, too?"

"I must, whether I will it so or not."

"But, I don't understand. You are becoming—what is the word?"

"Cryptic?"

"Yes, cryptic. You are becoming cryptic."

"Very well, then. Let me go back a little. I said a moment ago that I am not for sale, which is absolutely true. If I give up my father's name and take another name; if I give up the life I now live and enter into a compact with a man for another kind of a life; if I give up my home and my work for another home and another kind of work; if I do all these things I am giving up many things that are dear to me, and my business sense teaches me that unless the man can give me something that is the full equivalent for all these I'm going to be cheated in the transaction, and my business instincts revolt at the contemplation of such a transaction. Besides, I'll feel cheated throughout my whole life."

"Yes, I see all that," replied Guinevere, "but I still don't understand about the great-grandfather."

"I'm coming to him. Among the many things that I demand of this hypothetical man is clean ancestry. If, by any chance, his great-grandfather was given to excesses, was a man of bad habits, there might be a taint of blood in the family and that taint might manifest itself in my children."

"Why, Mary, you are looking far ahead, aren't you? And do you talk over such matters here in your home?"

"Yes, to both of your questions. Yes, mother

and I talk very freely together concerning such things. They are the vital things and my mother believes that vital matters should receive serious attention. We both believe in the home-grown variety of eugenics. Now, reverting to Tom merely as an illustration. Suppose I should discover in the course of my investigations that there is a taint in the blood because of excesses on the part of one of his ancestors, why I wouldn't marry him if he had the wealth of a Crœsus. I'll never jeopardize my whole life for the momentary pleasure of wearing a bridal veil."

"Why, Mary," exclaimed Guinevere, "I never heard a girl talk like that in my whole life."

"So much the worse for you," replied Mary in all gentleness. "We girls should band together in a sort of benevolent conspiracy to protect ourselves and to exact from young men the same clean habits of living that they expect from us. If I must live in the same house with a man my whole life, sit opposite him at the table three times a day, I have a right to exercise large discrimination when I make a choice. I'm not so sure that Tom isn't a sort of spoiled child with all the attentions that have been lavished upon him. I shouldn't enjoy having him tell me, after marriage, that he could have had any one of a dozen girls."

"No, of course not. But, Mary, you must admit that Tom is a good student."

"Well, I'm not so sure of that, either."

"But, Mary, just look at his grades."

"Oh, grades! They don't tell very much about one. I have sometimes wondered (and Uncle Danny suggested this to me) whether Tom isn't afflicted with academic vanity."

"What's that?"

"Well, you see, Tom likes to be popular—likes to be the center of the stage, as one might say, and high grades bring him adulation. Now, it is quite possible that he is diligent in his studies so as to achieve popularity, and not because he takes a deep and intelligent interest in those studies. It is just possible that he has more education than intelligence and that sort of man would not be a great comfort around the house."

"Mary Benton, whenever do you get time to think out all these things?"

"Why, I get it out of the same twenty-four hours that other people have at their disposal. It isn't so much a question of time as it is the use to which time is put."

"But at our house we scarcely have time to eat. We seem always to be in such a hurry getting ready to do something."

"That's bad for the digestion, and worse for the soul. In this home we look forward to our meals as the time and the occasion for a family reunion and those reunions are always a delightful experience. Meal-time with us is the best part of the day, and the meal amounts to a ceremony."

"Well, don't I know? Didn't I have supper with you this evening, and didn't I experience in this the real event of a lifetime?"

"Well, Guinevere, as you saw us this evening, you would see us at every meal."

"And isn't your mother a fine cook?"

"She certainly is; but, then, she is fine in everything she does."

"Oh, can't I see that! And she does everything so serenely and yet so thoroughly!"

"That's mother to a nicety. She never seems hurried, never becomes flustered, is never less than amiable, and yet has complete mastery of every detail of this home."

"Mary, I saw the other day the expression 'dignified simplicity.' Doesn't that fit your mother?"

"Exactly! She is just that, and no higher tribute can be paid to any woman."

"Why, Mary, that mother of yours is a liberal education."

"She is indeed! And I'll never be able to pay my

debt of gratitude to her for all she is to me and all she has done and is still doing for me."

"But she doesn't go out into society much, does she?"

"There is no need. She, herself, is society. Wherever you find mother there you will find society, even if she is alone."

"That's another of your original ideas, Mary Benton."

"No, that's merely another statement of truth about my mother. She is one of the rare women who are fit and agreeable company for themselves, which is the real test of a woman. Mother reads, and plays, and sings, and sews, and cooks—and does all of them as an intelligent person should. So she never becomes lonesome and never yearns for the often inane chit-chat of society functions. She does not aspire to be a purveyor of small talk. When she talks she says something that is worth listening to."

"Well, I know that well enough, don't I? But she can enter into good fun, too."

"Verily, yes. She has a delicious sense of humor. How it ever got about that women have no sense of humor is more than I can make out. The folks who circulate that report must not know such women as mother. Down there in the kitchen when you

and I were washing the dishes didn't you notice how whole-heartedly she entered into that fusillade of badinage, raillery and persiflage?"

"Mary Benton, stop it right now! Wherever did you learn so many big words? You smother me with them?"

"Oh, you'll survive; never fear. Why, I accumulate a vocabulary by reading and by talking with such people as father, mother and Uncle Danny. Besides, we make a study of words in this home, and make large use of the dictionary. We think that dowdiness in language is just as bad as dowdiness in dress. You'll never find mother looking slovenly, nor father either, for that matter."

"That father of yours; why, he's a joy. What fun we did have washing those dishes! And there he sat and joined in the chorus of fun. I can't recall that I ever laughed so much in my whole life."

"Father! Why, Guinevere, father is an institution. He's bed-rock; he's fundamental. He's the sort of man that ought to be put into a book. He's a philosopher, a poet, a preacher, and a humorist all rolled into one. And when you mix all those ingredients in right proportions you produce a man. And he always sits in the kitchen while mother and I wash the dishes and punctuates the talk with the choicest bits of philosophy and genial humor that

makes us forget we are working. Our dish-washing is a delightful entertainment that greatly aids digestion. Father often helps us wash the dishes, too."

"Your father help wash the dishes! Why, mine wouldn't know where to begin. And, besides, I was always led to believe that the kitchen is a fit place only for servants."

"Well, you poor girl! You have missed a lot of fun in your life. If ever I leave this home for another the memory of our kitchen and all that it means to all of us will be one of my most cherished possessions. You had a sample of it this evening."

"Yes, and I liked the sample so much that I'm going to copy the recipe and introduce it into our household."

"Careful, careful, there, young lady. That's a large contract and can't be executed like punching a ticket. It will take time, possibly a long time."

"Oh, I know that well enough," said Guinevere, "but I have a fair degree of perseverance. And before the winter is over I'm going to hold a family reunion in our kitchen or something'll snap."

"Something may snap in the midst of your reunion," laughed Mary.

"Yes, I know that, but just the same I'll do it if I have to call you in as an assistant. The two of

us could bring it to pass, I'm sure. You know I'm taking domestic science now and that is the trap I'll set for the family. When I get the run of the subject better I'll agree to get supper all alone if papa and mama will wash the dishes. I'll just dare them, and you know they would be ashamed to back down. I'll let you know, so you can come in and catch them at it. What a time I had with mama about that domestic science! Oh, she made a scene with the teachers and said she didn't propose to have her daughter messing around with pots and pans. Then she went to see Uncle Danny about it, but she never would tell me what he said to her. He must have said enough, though, for mama let me take domestic science without a murmur and said it could do me no harm. I wish I could find out what Uncle Danny said to her. Some day I'm going to bake a loaf of bread and take it to Uncle Danny. Do you think that would be all right, Mary?"

"All right? It would be more than all right, Guinevere. Uncle Danny will be pleased beyond words. Isn't he the dearest man ever?"

"I don't know him very well. I wish I knew him better. But I have a feeling that he doesn't care specially for the Smythe family."

"Well, that loaf of bread will cure him, and he'll

take you to his heart. I dare say that he knows already of your progress in domestic science."

"What makes you think so?" asked Guinevere eagerly.

"Oh, from little remarks he has let drop in my hearing from time to time. He thinks you are coming on finely."

"The blessed Uncle Danny!"

"Yes, I say that every day, and many times a day. They say that no one is indispensable, but Uncle Danny seems indispensable to me. I don't know how I'd ever get on without him."

"But, why? If I may ask."

"Oh, he gives me such good counsel about my teaching and about people as well as life in general. He's so dependable, and so sane, and so understanding."

"A sort of father confessor?"

"Just that! And he never fails me. When I don't know which course to take, he tells me and sets me right."

"Does that account for the fact that you are regarded as the most sensible girl in this town?"

"I was not aware," replied Mary modestly, "that I had gained such an enviable reputation as that."

"Well, you have, and that's what makes Tom Foster so fond of you, I suspect."

"Aha! That's another one of Thomas's weaknesses that I now discover."

"Weaknesses? Mary Benton, I need a pencil and slate to figure you out. Did you say weakness?"

"I did, indeed, and it is probably a strong weakness."

"Well," said Guinevere, "I give it up. What's the answer?"

"Oh, the answer is easily given. Tom always aspires to the title rôle. He expands in the limelight. If some peripatetic showman should come along Tom would want to lead the trick-bear through town for him. Oh, Thomas always wants to be visible. So, you see, if it has got about that I am a sensible girl, why I become another trick-bear and he would like to have it appear that he has a free pass to the front parlor of this latest sensation. He seems quite willing to shine by reflected light, but I'm interested in knowing whether he is able to shine by his own light."

"So that's what you mean by your 'internal examination,' is it?"

"Just that. But, Guinevere, I'm anxious to learn just how you happened to know that Tom is so fond of me?"

"Innocence! Why, every girl in this town knows

about that. Tom makes no secret of it, and he's so full of the subject that it just spills over."

"Oh, thou linguistic prodigy! Where under the canopy did you acquire this gift of language?"

"From Mary Benton, from books, and magazines, and from teachers. And Mary; it is the truth that Tom thinks you about perfection. He calls you a paragon."

"Mercy! As bad as that?"

"He says you have such a queenly manner and dress in such exquisite taste that you are good for the eyes."

"Guinevere, have you ever heard of any traces of insanity in Tom's family?"

"Mary, your words and your blushes don't seem to harmonize. But, really, you just ought to hear Tom talk about your taste in dress. And he's right about it, too. I wish I knew the secret of your good taste."

"You poor starveling! You are welcome to any secret that I possess on the subject of dress. When I write my sartorial volume I'll dedicate it to you."

"Mary, have you ever heard of any traces of insanity in the Benton family?"

"Bravo!" and Mary laughed in clear ringing tones. "You'll become the Sir Knight of the tournament if this progress continues. But, while you still

deign to wear gowns and not a coat of mail, let me divulge my secret. I'd rather adorn a costume than have it adorn me. I think a girl should be better and greater than the gown she wears. Besides, I want my dress to express me. Clothing is symptomatic. If I should wear hysterical clothing, that would indicate a hysterical character. Some costumes are emotional and others are thoughtful. Of the two I prefer the latter, so I think about my dress and try to make it express my thought, which is myself. My clothing must be neither obtrusive nor intrusive. I think too much of myself, my individuality, to permit mere inanimate clothing to eclipse me. It must help me to self-expression, but must ever be subordinate to the real me. It must be subsidiary, merely an auxiliary."

"Wait a bit, Miss Encyclopedia Dictionary. I am drowning in the deeps of language. Have you no pity upon a helpless child who is struggling and strangling in your very presence, right before your eyes?"

"Shall we call out the life-saving crew?" asked Mary.

"Do, please. But, Mary, how do you ever think of so many things?"

"Well, thinking is the real business of life. That being the case, it would shame me to farm out my

thinking to a dressmaker and pay her for doing what I can and ought to do for myself. To my thinking, education of the right sort tends toward simplicity and integrity. Believing this, I must practise what I believe, to be honest with my own convictions, and my apparel must aid me in the expression of these convictions. You applied the expression 'dignified simplicity' to my mother, and I'd like to be worthy of the same characterization. So there you have the secret of my manner of life, so far as clothing is concerned, and what I have said about myself may shed some light upon my attitude toward Thomas Foster, Esquire."

"I wish he could have heard all you have been saying to me."

"Mercy, no! I fear he might not have survived my drastic surgery. I'm afraid it might have deflated his vanity to such an extent that he would never have recovered his equilibrium. What Thomas needs most of all is a feeling for and a sense of real values. He is not able to distinguish between major and minor. What he wants always seems major to him. Until he achieves this sense of values, he's going to be the same airy, bombastic, inflated Tom that he is now. He would like to consider himself irresistible, but——"

"Stop right there, Miss Mary Benton. I don't

think it very polite for you to say of a guest in your home what you have been saying about poor me."

"Why, Guinevere, I didn't say a word about you; or, if I did so, I did it inadvertently, and sincerely beg your pardon."

"Oh, you're too delightful for anything. Of course, you didn't say a word about me, but what you were saying about Tom might have been said about me. I know that what I lack most is a sense of real values, but I have been taking great strides forward to-night. I'm so ashamed of myself for thinking that my little mites of minors were all majors that I could cry. Take that trip that we made through Europe. I wish I'd never seen Europe."

"Why, Guinevere Smythe! How can you say such a thing? To me that seems about the most glorious experience any girl could have."

"So it might have been; only it wasn't. The whole trip is just a blur in my mind, because we spent the time over minors and missed all the majors. Why, when people keep asking me if I saw this or that in London, or Paris, or Rome, I want to put my hands over my face, or scream, or do some other outlandish thing. Oh, we just bought gloves in Rome, that's all."

"What! You didn't see the Sistine Chapel, the

Forum, the Appian Way, and the other wonderful things in Rome? Didn't you see Michael Angelo's *Moses*?"

"Not one of them, not one! I never heard of most of them till I got back home. Mama did speak of going to the Forum one day, but changed her mind, saying it would probably look like any other stone-quarry."

"Why, you poor child! I never dreamed that you had missed all those great things. People say it is worth a trip across the ocean just to see the Sistine Ceiling."

"Yes, and I was buying silly gloves. But don't get me started on Europe or I may become violent and work harm to your furniture. Oh, Mary, if you had only been along! There, I am crying, aren't I? Well, I just can't help it. But, Mary, let me tell you a secret. The tears from this left eye are for Europe; but the ones from this right one are tears of joy because you are so good to me and have shown me to-night what a big-hearted, clear-headed girl can be and do. There, I'll just wipe my left eye, but let the right one cry as much as it likes. Good night. But, no, wait a moment. Mary, before I go I wish you'd tell me what passage from literature best describes the sort of woman you would like to be."

"Oh, that's easy enough, for I quote it to myself every day. It was Longfellow, of course, who wrote it, and it is this: 'When she had passed it seemed like the ceasing of exquisite music.' Good night, Guinevere, and pleasant dreams."

## CHAPTER VII

### THE HIGH-SCHOOL TEACHER

Miss Adeline Burke taught in the high school and had been doing so for more years than she cared to recount. Enough to say that her teaching had to do with the second generation and sometimes it came to pass that a furtive smile on the face of a pupil betokened the fact that the teacher was using the same educational formula that she had considered applicable in the case of the former generation. These reminiscent smiles and looks on the faces of her pupils utterly escaped Miss Burke, who continued in the utmost complacency to dispense to the second generation the same sort of mental pabulum, served in the same style, which the first generation had accepted none too graciously. It fell out, too, that sundry books had descended from parents to children, in the natural course of events, and in these books pupils found annotations in the hand-writing of their parents. With these notes they were wont to regale themselves as a sort of anticipatory enjoyment of the teacher's offerings for the day.

Unconscious as Miss Burke seemed to be of the

furtive glances of her pupils and the clandestine notes that circulated among them which related to herself and her teaching, she was, nevertheless, at least sub-conscious that her status in the school was not what it once was, and that her tenure of position was, perhaps, somewhat insecure. She felt herself to be in a state of unstable equilibrium, but could not adduce any evidence. This feeling persisted until, at length, it occurred to her that her one hope of relief from the incubus of dread was Uncle Danny and she forthwith betook herself to his door, despite the drifts of snow that impeded her progress. Upon entering the room she observed as a preliminary:

"The meteorological conditions are not specially conducive to the peregrinations of a peripatetic pedagogue."

"Gee, ain't it fierce!" replied Uncle Danny.

"If you will permit me to divest myself of my impedimenta I should like to ask the inestimable privilege of holding a colloquy with the tetrarch in his own empery," she continued.

"Surest thing in the world," said he.

"The precipitation to-day has been of rather abnormal intensity," she further observed.

"Ain't it the truth?" he replied in even tones.

"Uncle Danny, I have braved the inclemency of

the elements this evening to confer with you upon a matter of supreme moment."

"Go to it."

"But, before I proceed, you will not take umbrage, I am sure, if I express surprise and sore disappointment that one whose reputation for scholastic attainments far transcends the limits of this community should use language that falls so far below the accepted academic standards."

"Don't it beat the snakes?"

"I am sure that in your heart of hearts you must cherish a sublime reverence for what we scholars recognize as academic."

"You bet your boots! But that word 'academic' gets my goat. I am always afraid I shall misspell or mispronounce it."

"Really, I feel myself in a sort of penumbra as to the full significance of your words."

"I fear I may substitute one vowel for another," said he.

"Even yet I find my mental horizon somewhat beclouded."

"Horizons do suffer that misfortune at times. But, as to the portentous matter that caused you to desert the comforts of your own boudoir and become a transmigrant breasting the unsuitableness of the

recent superabundant precipitation, as you so aptly and accurately expressed it—"

"Oh, thank you very much! But, before coming to my major theme, let me be bold enough to surmise that you hold with me as to the inestimable qualities of Miss Mary Benton."

"Isn't she a scream?"

"A what?" she flashed.

"I mean a peach—I mean, yes, she is a bird."

"Such language, it seems to me, is an unfortunate and precipitate declension from the tenets of good form."

"Well, wouldn't that jar you!"

"Uncle Danny, if you persist in using such language I must beg the privilege of terminating this interview. I am not accustomed to have gentlemen, in my presence, use the language of the street."

"And may I ask what gentlemen use the sort of language that fits into the mold of your requirements?"

"Well, there's Doctor Dunlevy."

"Oh, yes, Dunlevy. Well, he's quite all right."

"Indeed, he is. His diction is unimpeachable, his thoughts are lofty, and his language never descends from the high plane of excellence."

"Great stuff! But how long since you had the

privilege and the pleasure of conversing with the brilliant and engaging young doctor?"

"Well, it has been several weeks now."

"He has been taking treatment recently, and I think you will find him much improved."

"Improved? I didn't note any room for improvement."

"So? Well, if you thought him perfect a few weeks ago you'll consider him a demigod now."

"He is altogether fascinating."

"I wonder," mused Uncle Danny, "what views he holds on the doctrine of reciprocity?"

"I can not vouchsafe a reply to your interrogatory, but, on general principles, it is a fair inference that such a distinguished scholar must maintain a generous attitude toward all national and international questions. But you say he has been receiving treatment—what kind of treatment?"

"Massage."

"Massage? Indeed! And what was the nature of the malady that he should need that treatment?"

"Why, he was suffering from an enlargement of the doctorate concept and had to be treated for adipose academic ego," said Uncle Danny.

"That sounds quite dreadful, and I am acutely distressed. Did the treatment prove efficacious?"

"Oh, quite so, and he is far along toward becoming a human being now."

"You do not, by any chance, happen to mean divine instead of human, do you?" she asked.

"Divine tommyrot! There are no divine men, and I'm glad of it. If we had such things around they'd litter up the premises and disfigure the landscape."

"Why, Uncle Danny! That sounds emphatically sacrilegious to me."

"Yes, it would, but facts are not changed by the way they sound to people. Truth and euphony are two very different things and the auditory nerve would be a poor detective to send out in search of truth."

"You are pleased to be recondite, perhaps?" she suggested.

"Recondite, nutmegs! Why, that statement is simple enough for the kindergarten."

"But you see, I'm not in the kindergarten class," she replied.

"No, worse luck. If you were you would not be talking about divine men. Jesus Christ was the only divine man and, if we men could or would imitate Him as a human man we'd be so busy and so happy that we shouldn't have time to bother our heads about becoming divine. The more thoroughly

human we are the nearer our approach to the greatness, the simplicity, and the sublimity of Christ. If you had been thinking more about human men and less about the impossible divine ones through all the years that are past, you wouldn't be here to-night on your present errand."

"And why would I not be here, and where would I be?"

"At home with your husband, of course."

"My dear sir, it occurs to me that you presume too much in taking such liberties with my private affairs."

"Hoity-toity! Didn't your private affairs lead you to this place to-night?"

"Well, candor compels me to reply in the affirmative, but I had no thought that the topic of husbands would be injected into the conversation."

"No, I suspect not, but this husband that I mentioned, by way of illustration, is mythical and need not disturb your equipoise in the least."

"Mythical?"

"Oh, well, I mean that I can neither visualize nor localize him at the present time. He hasn't appeared upon my own horizon, however imminent he may be in reality. But this husband that we speak of is neither here nor there; so we may as well come to the main issue. You came around this evening to

invoke my assistance in an effort to allay the agitation of which you have become conscious, that has to do with your re-election for next year."

"Why, Uncle Danny, your prescient and perspicacious percipiency, amounting almost to omniscience, borders upon the uncanny."

"There now, let us interdict the alliterative polysyllabic language and descend to the plane of understandable English."

"As to that, my dear sir, I pride myself upon my fluency in the use of the mother tongue."

"Yes, and you know it is said, on good authority, that pride goeth before the fall. If you are dispossessed of your position you may attribute it, in some good measure, to this fluency of which you seem to be so proud."

"Why, how can that be?"

"Well, to be quite frank with you, it has got about in school circles that no sound enchants you quite so much as the sound of your own voice. Hence, it has come to pass that you are voluble in your school and monopolize the time with your fluency in the use of the mother tongue. Your pupils prepare their work and then have no opportunity to recite by reason of this self-same fluency. This fluency, coupled with a grandiose and oracular style, has become a thorn in the flesh of your pupils, and

they have lodged complaints with their parents who, in turn, have transmitted them to the board members, who have passed them along to me and many others. So, you see, my knowledge of the entire affair is quite easily explained. I wish I were able to refute these charges of excessive fluency, but I am not. And now I find that you take pride in the very thing that your pupils complain of. Why, your pupils laugh over your tendency to talk when you think you are teaching."

"What! My pupils laugh at me? Never!"

"Wake up, there, Nick, and do your duty. Somebody has been guilty of mendacity in this town, and should be bitten by some upright dog as a mordant reminder of his grave transgression!"

"I beg your pardon, Uncle Danny. I had no slightest intention of impugning your veracity, but was merely calling in question the reliableness of your information."

"Oh, as to that, the information is altogether reliable. I have overheard your pupils a dozen times making merry at your expense. They bubble over with laughter when recounting your adventures in the realms of eloquent periods. But their greatest fun comes from exchanging experiences with the pupils you had last year and discovering that you use the same illustrations, make the same

comments, and grow expansive at the same points of the lesson from year to year. It seems a bit irreverent, but they characterize you as Miss Static and they laughingly wonder whether next year they will call you Miss Ex-Static."

"And you tolerate that sort of talk by those degenerate reprehensible ingrates?"

"Tolerate? Tolerate your grandmother's wishbone! There is no question of tolerating. Those youngsters talk of the things which they see and, therefore, know as naturally as they breathe. If they were given an opportunity to do some talking in the class-room they might not blow off so much steam on the outside. They are normal human beings and if the régime of your class-room doesn't appeal to them they are free to say so. But you seem to think they should be repressed and made to simulate an interest that they do not feel. You have a large contract, Miss Burke, if you hope to reconstruct human nature. Those young folks are delightful because they are so spontaneous, so transparent, so frankly honest and sincere, and so free from guile. And yet you would apparently have them become hypocrites as a contribution to your comfort. You want them to conform to your ways of thinking and doing, but seem to think that it is not incumbent

upon you to get around to their ways of thinking and doing. Now, with all your years——"

"Please omit statistics, whatever other forms of good taste you may be inclined to violate," she said, bridling.

"Oh, very well," said he, laughing, "ancient history is not one of my strong points, anyhow, and I prefer to confine myself to current events. And since I seem already to have acquired a reputation as a violator of the proprieties I may as well go to the limit."

"As if you had not done so already," she responded.

"Far from it! In fact, I have been but dallying about in the vestibule, and have not yet entered into the castle proper."

"Well, seeing that I have become quite indurated, I am curious to know what else you can possibly say. It will be interesting to learn how many different kinds of sinner I am."

"Quite a plenty, thank you."

"Would you become facetious in such a case as this?"

"I could do so easily, if I thought I could set you to laughing."

"And do you think I could not laugh if there were only something to laugh at?"

"Ah, there you are! If you could ever find any-

thing to laugh at, your taking yourself so seriously before those youngsters would be abundant justification for uncontrollable laughter. But, even if you see anything to laugh at I doubt if you have anything left to laugh with. Your laughter glands seem to have been absorbed by your academic zeal. How I do wish you might take a big hearty laugh with those glorious boys and girls! They would love you for it. If only the pores of your soul could open so that laughter might slip in, the experience would be better than a month's salary. If you could only make some change——"

"Change! I have no desire to change. I'm quite satisfied with myself as I am."

"Ah, there's the pity of it! May the good Lord help all those people who are satisfied, for there is no other source of help that can do them any good. You came over here to-night calling for help, but want to dictate the terms upon which you will accept it. If you were struggling in the water, in imminent peril, you'd hardly say that you refused to be rescued unless the rescue boat were painted lavender. And yet, that's just what you are doing now. You belong among those people who will be at more pains to justify a wrong course than to find the right one. If you were by way of having a modicum of acumen you would see that you have arrayed yourself against your pupils, their parents, the school board, and

many other citizens, and are virtually saying that they are wrong while you are right."

"But, Uncle Danny, my conscience—"

"Oh, bother your conscience! I never can tell a conscience from a digestive apparatus or a liver. Many a person mistakes his liver for a conscience. Many another has an attack of indigestion and calls it conscientious scruples. A conscience, to be an asset and a reliable guide to conduct, must be an educated one. Common sense and the grace of God are the things needed to keep a conscience up to the mark and in good working order. I shall gladly concede the grace of God, to obviate discussion, and make you a gratuitous offering of a clean bill of health as to incontestable integrity, but beyond that I can not advance. You have been accumulating such vast stores of uncommon sense through all these —I mean in the past—that common sense has been crowded to the wall. If you only had as much of that as you have of the uncommon variety, it would prove an efficacious remedy for your spiritual paralysis. Here you are rushing headlong toward the cliff when common sense would counsel you to go in the opposite direction. Here you sit, stoutly maintaining your satisfaction with yourself, when common sense would dictate a change of attitude and policies."

"Common sense would do nothing of the sort, my dear sir. On the contrary, common sense has been dictating the course I am pursuing and expect to pursue. Common sense told me that a successful teacher, first of all, must have scholarship and, as you very well know, I have been traveling toward that goal with unremitting assiduity. I have my two degrees and am working toward a third, and I take great pride in the fact that my scholarship is—"

"Scholarship! Oh, piffle! You have far more scholarship than you know how to use. The trouble with you is you are a non-conductor of scholarship. You are not able to market your product effectually. Your scholarship has been kept in cold storage so long that it has become stale and musty. It needs air and sunlight to glorify it and to make it potent. If the currents of vigorous life could only be run through your cold-storage plant your scholarship would spring into life and your pupils would catch the spirit and rejoice exceedingly.

"Another trouble with you is that you have been a poser so long that the pose has encompassed and encased you till now it is doubtful if you have vitality sufficient to break through the crust and come forth where people are and where real and abounding life is. You have posed so long that no longer do you walk, or talk, or think, or act as a normal

human being should do. You can't have any fun. Indeed, there is no such thing as good fun for you, and when your pupils are having good wholesome fun, as all healthy young people should do, you take exception to them and apply opprobrious epithets to them. You are such a devotee at the shrine of your own illusions that your spiritual insight is distorted and thus all people, your pupils included, seem wrong to you."

"Just a moment, if you please, Uncle Danny," she interrupted. "Is there to be no end to this meaningless cant and feckless twaddle?"

"Nick, Nick," cried Uncle Danny, "arouse yourself and take cognizance of passing events. Why, Nick, your uncle is a blot upon the fair name of this town, for he has so far forgotten the proprieties and his own dignity as to descend to feckless twaddle. Nick, can't you shed just a tear or two over the ruins of your lamented Uncle Danny?"

As Uncle Danny indulged in this outburst of raillery he watched the face of his auditor to note the presence of any incipient smile that might, by any chance, light up her immobile countenance, but he watched in vain. Her face remained as calm and stolid as the face of the Sphinx, and he could not repress the silent prayer, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do."

After an interval of complete and somewhat omi-

nous silence Uncle Danny continued in subdued tones, "Miss Burke, I have yearned toward you for many moons and still do; but you seem obdurate. I suspect that you are joined to your idols and, perhaps, no mere verbal earthquake could ever jar you loose from your complacent moorings. You are an accomplished actress, and the part you have so long played has become yourself. You have striven to have people believe you something bigger and better than you really are, and have tried to make all your teaching contribute to this end. Instead of making teaching a simple process of setting forth the truth you have made it as complex as possible, hoping thereby to win greater credit to yourself. You go so far as to turn simple subjects upside down to make them appear the more complex. Directness, clearness, simplicity—these are qualities that do not appeal to you. Your pupils have discovered the actress and are now repudiating you. You spoke of Mary Benton, when you came in. I wish you could go to school to that fine girl."

"What! Go to school to Mary Benton? Don't you know that she was one of my pupils, and that I taught her about all she knows?"

"Belay there!" cried Uncle Danny. "You are exceeding the speed limit. Mary Benton knows a lot of things that neither you nor the school ever taught her. That's another trouble with you. You

would claim credit for what the Lord has done through the agency of sensible parents. The best things that go to make up Mary Benton were never acquired in your class-room, and those are the very things I would have you learn from her. She is open-minded, responsive, natural, and sincere—the very qualities that would make you a better woman and a better teacher. If you were such a teacher as she there would be no talk of displacing you. Her pupils are fond of her, and that because she is fond of them. You seem to think that, because she was once a pupil of yours, you will always be her superior. But that is a delusion."

"Permit me to observe," she replied curtly, "that I did not come in this evening to hear you rhapsodize over Miss Benton. I know she has many excellent qualities, but I can not think that she is more than human."

"No, indeed," rejoined Uncle Danny, "thank the good Lord, nor yet less than human, I am glad to say. She is a wholesome, normal human being, and that's the best that can be said of her. I'm wondering whether, in your classification of people, only those of the male persuasion ever reach the plane of the divine."

"By the way, Uncle Danny, that reminds me of Doctor Dunlevy. You said he has been taking treat-

ment. I wonder if you will not supply fuller details of that treatment."

"Well, I am somewhat reluctant to do so, since I was present during the process. In fact, that treatment was administered in this very room. I might also say that the ordeal was far less severe than the one to which you have been subjected. It is worthy of note, also, that the patient responded to the treatment far more graciously than the present one. But, then, I do not lose sight of the fact that the Doctor is still young."

"Sir?"

"I beg your pardon, but, for the nonce, I was forgetting about the forbidden ground. What I was trying to say was that he is still in the plastic state—"

"Sir?"

"A thousand pardons! I seem to be losing my bearings in the use of words."

"Speaking of Doctor Dunlevy, Uncle Danny, I think your encomiums are quite superfluous. I have the highest esteem and even admiration for the Doctor and have even cherished the hope—but never mind about that. I must now be going. I thank you for your time, but for nothing else that now occurs to me. Good night."

"Good night, Miss Burke. You are quite wel-

come, I assure you, to my time, and to all the rest. Good night."

Standing before the fire in quiet contemplation, Uncle Danny at length said, "Nick, you ought to be thankful that you are a dog and, therefore, not subject to the truancy laws. How would you like to go to school to that? Say, Nick, we are on the decline. We have lost our cunning. We have failed utterly. But, let us not give ourselves up as utterly hopeless. Let us have courage. Perhaps, the next one who comes for treatment may not be one of the perverse and stiff-necked kind and may be a bit more receptive. Let us hope."

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE PREACHER

UNCLE DANNY was a communicant of the church which the Reverend Simeon Borland served as pastor. This was Mr. Borland's initial charge and the second year of his pastorate. He was a thoroughly devout young man, zealous for the advancement of the cause he served, a diligent student of doctrines, and, withal, a zealous expounder of the doctrines he studied. But, with all these qualities, there was still an evident lack of some quality that many of his parishioners thought ought to inhere in a pastor. There was an air of detachment about him that forbade intimate associations and friendships. He seemed to be conscious that he had been set apart and, therefore, always conscious of his clerical functions. He was, apparently, so engrossed in his duties as a clergyman that he was but vaguely cognizant of the movements of the social organism. He seemed eager to have the members of his flock learn his language, but was at no pains to learn theirs. He gave rather listless assent to their verbal offerings while the focus of his attention seemed else-

where. They liked him but inwardly wished that they might contrive some additions to his many good qualities.

He and Uncle Danny were good friends and exchanged calls but, somehow, the knowledge had failed to penetrate his mind that Uncle Danny was a clergyman until he was well along in his second year. He knew, of course, that Uncle Danny was a professor in the college, and as such he had a high regard for him, but he had never associated him with the work of a pastor. This knowledge came to him, therefore, with something of a shock. There was a wedding in one of the families of his congregation, and he received an invitation as a matter of course. But no mention was made touching the matter of his officiating. Since this might be a mere oversight he made due preparation for the event as if his performing the ceremony were a foregone conclusion. His consternation exceeded all bounds, therefore, when he saw the contracting parties come face to face, beneath the floral arch, with Uncle Danny, who proceeded with the ceremony as if to the manner born.

In a trice he felt himself to be in a sort of maelstrom of conflicting emotions, whose relative importance he could not accurately appraise. He was surprised beyond words to see Uncle Danny per-

forming the ceremony with so much dignity and facile grace. He was chagrined, deeply so, to find himself supplanted in the home of his parishioners, with no previous word of explanation or apology. And he was embarrassed, too, to find that he had been preaching through all the preceding months in the presence of one of his own craft. Then the impression came into his consciousness that his people had dealt less than fairly with him in not revealing to him Uncle Danny's identity. All in all, the event did not at all measure up to the limits of his anticipations, and his abstraction was quite evident. His congratulations were of the perfunctory sort, and he failed to do full justice to the wedding repast.

The entire affair cast him into a sort of daze, and gave him the feeling that something sinister and inexplicable had invaded his clerical calm. Try as he might, he could not rid himself of the feeling that he was the victim of untoward influences, and this feeling grew upon him as he anticipated the services of the following Sunday. Of course, Uncle Danny would be there—he never failed—and, of course, he must show no perturbation in the performance of his duties. At one time he was tempted to ask Uncle Danny to preach for him, but dismissed that at once as not the proper solution of his perplexity. So he continued to brood over the mat-

ter, with consequent loss of sleep and appetite, until on Friday evening he took himself in hand and forced himself into the presence of Uncle Danny. The matter could become no worse whatever befell and he experienced a faint glimmering of hope that Uncle Danny might, in some way, afford relief from the strain.

"Come in, come right in," said Uncle Danny, with a heartiness that warmed the cockles of his heart at once and brought a flush of pleasure to his face. "Sit down in that easy chair and let's have a good old-fashioned confab. I was just wishing some congenial soul would drop in and help me to relax. Friday evening is my time for relaxation, and that is a game that two can play at better than one if they are rightly attuned. I'm keyed up pretty well during the week with my teaching, my faculty work, and the other odds and ends that absorb my time, and so on Friday evening I like to do something different."

"But pray, Uncle Danny," inquired the visitor, "what method of relaxation would you have used if I had not come in?"

"Oh, as to that," said Uncle Danny, "I was simply ruminating when I heard your footsteps and had no definite plans for the evening. In half an hour or so I should probably have got hold of some novel

that suited my mood and pored over its pages till bed-time, possibly late bed-time, according to the influence of the book in hand."

"You are a reader of fiction, then?"

"Oh, yes, indeed, gloriously so. Why, in the matter of fiction I am positively intemperate."

"You? And you a college professor and also a clergyman, and still read novels, and, as you say, to excess?"

"Steady, now, Brother Borland! I did not say to excess for I do not know the content of the word when applied to the reading of good fiction."

"But, Uncle Danny, in my work I find so much else that I feel I need for spiritual nourishment and refreshment that I find neither time nor inclination for the reading of fiction."

"So, I dare say," Uncle Danny replied, "you read books on theology."

"Why, certainly."

"Now, don't think me irreverent or iconoclastic, but let me recommend the reading of Patent Office Reports or such like literature for a change, if your scruples disdain fiction."

"Why, Uncle Danny, you surprise me."

"Well, I have surprised quite a few people in my time, by all accounts. But a really big surprise is wholesome medicine, sometimes. By the way, you

have your sermon written for Sunday morning?"

"To be sure, or I should be at it now."

"So I thought. Well, then, let me ask about how many times, in that sermon, do you use the expression 'unsearchable riches'?"

"Really, Uncle Danny, you seem endowed with the power of divination."

"Not a bit of it. But what led to that remark?"

"Well, to be frank, I do use that expression several times in my sermon, now that you remind me."

"Of course you do. It is a habit with you, a habit you contracted in the seminary, and a habit that is not easy to break. I know from experience. In the course of my own work in the seminary, I, too, made quite a large collection of those theological bromides and I dispensed them from the sacred desk with lavish prodigality. Then, at last, like the Prodigal, I came to myself in a far country, and realized that I was giving at least a good imitation of sounding brass and tinkling cymbal and, forthwith, I proceeded to vaccinate myself for theological bromidism. It was not easy to do but I knew it had to be done unless I would give my hearers mental dyspepsia."

"Permit an interruption, Uncle Danny. I do not know what you mean by mental dyspepsia."

"Well, you will recall Mark Antony's speech over Cæsar's body. When he first called Brutus and Cassius honorable men the crowd hurrahed for those two worthies. Then he used the same expression again but the applause was not quite so noisy. He continued to use it, again and again, until the people became so tired of hearing it reiterated that they got mad and chased those chaps out of town. They had mental dyspepsia, nothing less."

"But the expression I use had a high and noble meaning."

"That matters not at all. Quail is regarded as a great delicacy. But the man who essayed the task of eating a quail a day for a month was heartily sick of his bargain and of quail long before the month was gone. The mental palate as well as the physical craves variety and will not brook the same bill of fare day after day. Why, the Israelites lost their taste for manna even and that you know was a celestial dish."

"So you think, Uncle Danny, that my expression is proving as unpalatable as quail or manna?"

"Not being a food specialist, I can not say, but I can readily conceive that such might be the case. You see, if your people can anticipate what you will say each Sunday, they may elect to stay at home and try to worry along with the phonograph."

"Some of them do."

"Possibly for that very reason," Uncle Danny said, smiling.

"But your logic doesn't work in your own case, for you are always there," replied Mr. Borland.

"I was hoping you wouldn't mention that fact, for I didn't want to tell you that I often go from a sense of duty and not because the preaching lures me out in spite of myself. I could often get more spiritual nourishment from other sources than I get from your sermons. That cuts pretty close, my boy, but you forced me to say it."

"Pray don't apologize, Uncle Danny, for you are giving me spiritual nourishment right now in great abundance. But why didn't the professors at the seminary ever put us on our guard against the very things you tell me of?"

"Why, if I may put it so, because they have more religion than Christianity. The study of doctrine has dried up the sources and fountains of fertility in them. No one ever speaks of Christ's religion but He is the source, the embodiment, and exemplification of Christianity. If those seminary professors would teach Christ and the Bible instead of men's opinions their students would be better off. They remind me of some teachers who haven't time to teach Shakespeare, because they spend all their time teaching the editor's notes."

"I see the distinction clearly, Uncle Danny, and thank you for the enlightenment. But that leads me to remark that services must be abandoned in our church next Sunday because the pastor is incapacitated. Either that, or I'll have to employ some means to keep you here at home."

"Neither the one nor the other, my dear boy."

"What then? You can't think that I'd have the temerity to try to preach that sermon with you in the audience, can you?"

"I get your point of view," said Uncle Danny, "but there is still another phase that is worth considering."

"I shall be glad to hear it, you may be sure."

"Well, I have traveled the road over which you are now traveling and my experiences have generated large sympathy with the younger men. Hence, I advise you to preach the sermon as you had planned and later on we can go over it together to determine wherein it might be improved."

"Will you do that?"

"Why, of course."

"Good! You have saved a drowning man, and he is properly grateful. But, what about Sunday evening?"

"Well, as to that, you might arrange a service of song interspersed with remarks by a half dozen people whom you will apprise in advance."

"You are thinking of cooperation, I take it."

"Yes, and that will be good for the church. The people don't have enough to do and they become spiritually lethargic in consequence."

"Very well, I see that. And then about the next Sunday? Let's have your entire prescription."

"Aha! You are becoming greedy. Young man, I didn't undertake to manage the church for the remainder of the year."

"No, but you inaugurated this theological normal course, and you ought to be sufficiently interested in your own enterprise to see it through."

"Well," said Uncle Danny with a hearty chuckle, "your proposition does seem fair even if it does impose upon me more responsibility than I had anticipated. But, if you take my medicine you must prepare for a busy time all next week."

"Very well, Mr. Physician. I think the tonic of this evening will invigorate me. Now, what's the program?"

"In the first place, you'll have to arrange for a second song service for the evening, for one sermon is all you'll have time for. Did you ever preach from the text 'Except ye become as little children'?"

"No, I never did. But, why?"

"Well, that's to be your text; and by way of illustration you will read *Old Curiosity Shop* so as to

absorb Little Nell, *Bleak House* for Little Joe, and *A Christmas Carol* for Tiny Tim. Then, while you are resting, you will commit to memory 'Little Boy Blue' and 'There, Little Girl, Don't Cry.' After you get all that done and have prepared your sermon you will read *Pollyanna* just to put a good taste in your heart for Sunday morning."

"Is that all? Well, let us hope there may be no weddings next week. Cupid ought to take a vacation till the pastor catches up with his work."

"Wake up, there, Nick, you're missing a good thing here. You should arouse yourself and help Uncle Danny celebrate this important occasion. We have discovered a preacher who is willing to read books, yea even novels, yea even Dickens for the glory of God and the good of men's souls."

"A very good peroration, Uncle Danny. But, before I go home to enter upon the very ambitious program that you have arranged for me, I shall be glad to have you give me any other precepts that you have lurking about you that you may think applicable to myself or my work."

"Nick," Uncle Danny cried, "thou sluggish member of the canine tribe, why didn't you come alive, and chase this reverend man out of the house before he clamored for further treatment?"

"Never mind, Nick," responded Mr. Borland,

"better lie still and be at peace. There is enough disturbance hereabout without any assistance from you. Besides, this reverend man is here to stay until he has undergone the complete ordeal of expurgation. See, Uncle Danny, I have a tight hold upon the arms of this chair; now do your worst."

"Oh, the worst is over, I hope. If you eliminate the vain repetitions in your sermons you will do the same in your prayers."

"Do I do that, too?"

"Oh, lamentably so."

"Please specify."

"Well, in your prayers, you repeat the name of the Deity, over and over. It is a mere habit, and yet it causes the attentive listener to feel that the Lord is not hearkening to your petitions and that you are reminding Him that you are still addressing Him. If you were having a heart to heart talk with me you would not utter my name in every third sentence. If you did, and some one should overhear you, he would infer that I was not listening and might be trying to escape and that you were trying to hold me and my attention."

"The culprit pleads guilty to the charge. Anything else?"

"Yes, there are some other things connected with your prayers that have claimed my attention. In

common with many others, you often seem to be intent upon giving the Lord information and yet you claim to believe in His omniscience. This has led me to wonder often whether you are not more acutely conscious of the presence of the people than you are of the presence of the Lord."

"Uncle Danny, as an analytic philosopher you are a distinct success. Besides, you are not utterly devoid of surgical skill. But, what else, now that I am in the way of becoming inured to your treatment?"

"Well, I was irreverent enough to count the other Sunday, and I found that you used the word 'bless' twenty-seven times in your morning prayer."

"Well, what can be the objection to that aside from the matter of repetition?"

"I could waive the repetition, if I could only think that you know what the word means. I have asked many a clergyman to give a definition of the word but have failed, so far, to receive a satisfactory answer. It seems quite inexplicable, therefore, that you or any other man would use, in a brief prayer, a word twenty-seven times that you could not define if you were challenged for a definition. It is one of those vague words that creep into our habit of speaking that seem to relieve us of the trouble of thinking. I know a preacher who

never fails to pray that we may all be humble, but I am sure he doesn't mean it, for if the Lord should answer that prayer for him it would make a great change in his manner of life. I have rarely seen a man who is more egotistic, bombastic, and oracular, and I have often wondered how the good Lord would set about it to reduce him to a condition or state of humility. I have often wondered whether repetition of Job's troubles wouldn't be required to bring the answer to his prayer. You know the hymn

'Prayer is the soul's sincere desire
Uttered or unexpressed,
The motion of a hidden fire
That trembles in the breast.

'Prayer is the burden of a sigh,
The falling of a tear,
The upward glancing of an eye
When none but God is near.'

Now this hymn seems to teach us that prayer is a sincere aspiration; certainly it is not oratory."

"Just a moment, Uncle Danny; I'm needing a little time for mental mastication. You are giving me a rather hearty diet and my powers of assimilation are more limited than I had been made aware

of. You say that prayer is aspiration. Would you say, then, that aspiration is prayer?"

"Indeed, yes. Oh, that reminds me: there is another novel you must read quite soon. The title is *John Percyfield*. I hope you'll read it so as to make the acquaintance of the author, C. Hanford Henderson. In another book he says it is immoral for any one to do less than his best. That's another ration that you'll need to chew on. Well, at any rate, the best part of you and me is the divine essence within us and our business on earth is to develop that divine principle to the utmost, so that it may come to dominate and direct every thought and every act of our life. Prayer, therefore, is the yearning out of this divine part of us for higher, greater, and better things. Hence, every fervent aspiration is a prayer. Besides, we help answer our own prayers."

"Hold a bit, there, Uncle Danny," interrupted Mr. Borland. "That seems a strong statement and I fear I must part company with you if you adhere to it."

"Not a bit of it. This duet of thinking is just getting under way. This divine principle we speak of is a part of God and our aspiration is an emanation from that divine part of us and serves to enlarge and strengthen that principle. So when we aspire earnestly we inevitably act in the line of our own

prayers. Prayer serves to give the Lord the right of way and He works by means of the divine essence within us. If I yearn and yearn for a state of mind I'll surely strive the more diligently to attain that state."

"Yes, Uncle Danny, I see that now. If I get to yearning to know Tiny Tim, I'll read the book."

"Just so. Then multiply that by a thousand and the product spells growth, and the divine principle will dominate the life."

"Oh, I see it, and am eager to set about answering some of my prayers. But, really, I must be going unless you have some further admonitions you'd like to dispense."

"Well," and Uncle Danny hesitated as if debating with himself, "I'd get a sack-coat if I were you."

"What! You would make a bob-tailed preacher of me, would you? But why, pray?"

"For the moral and spiritual effect."

"There, now, I'm lost in the profundities again."

"No profundity about it—just alphabet teaching, or the fives of the multiplication table."

"Well, then, I must be one of the retarded pupils we are hearing so much about."

"Very well, sonny; the primer class will recite. Here, then, is the sartorial philosophy in a nut-shell. Wearing that long-tailed coat all the week is

too much of a strain on any man. It saps his vitality. A clerical coat keeps you keyed up to clerical pitch all the while, and you never have a chance to relax and become an every-day human being. When you go about among your parishioners clad in that outfit they feel that they ought to stop work and recite the golden text. You must learn to speak their language, to know their feelings, to enter into their plans, and you can't succeed very well in a clerical costume. You inspire the feeling in them that you are conscious of your superiority, and so they can't talk freely to you or with you, and they will not lay their hearts bare to you, as they must do if you are to be of the greatest service to them."

"I take it, then, Uncle Danny, that you would have the white necktie accompany the clerical coat to oblivion during the week?"

"By all means. If you go out to see one of your farmer members you will win him if you take part in the work in which he is engaged and your white tie will not comport with the work of the farm. And his soul is of more importance than your gear; so you'd better adopt the sort of gear that will prove the best bait for his soul. If you go into some humble home and find the mother weeping over a sick baby you want to feel free to lend a hand at once without fear of soiling your clothes. If you rock

the baby while she washes the neglected dishes her faith in you and what you represent will be greatly strengthened. Then, when the baby recovers she'll come to church and bring some of the neighbors with her."

"Uncle Danny, there is one lowly and subdued preacher in this town who is going to moult his white necktie next Monday morning."

"Very good. And, in that case, here endeth the lesson."

"Just a moment. Let's see whether I can recapitulate the main points of the lesson aforesaid. I'm to refrain from repetitions—no matter how sonorous and noble the words may be—quail and manna. I must refrain from trying to enlighten the Lord as to mundane affairs. I must either be able to define the word 'bless' or else delete it. I must distinguish between religion and Christianity, preaching Christ rather than the opinions of theologians. I must learn that poetical definition of prayer and practise it, also, praying to the Lord and not at or to the people. Then I must take an active part in helping answer my own prayers. Finally, brethren, I must shed my elongated coat and white tie and become a human being so as to be a fit companion for other human beings."

"Very well done and you have proved a very apt

pupil. I now take great pleasure in promoting you to the next higher grade. And let me add that pupils of that grade have permission to go fishing with me or take rambles when the weather is suitable."

"Oh, is that the school in which you have learned all your philosophy?"

"Yes, and that school takes very high rank. In that school one learns of space, of sky, of stars, and the other big things. One brushes cob-webs and dust from one's soul in that school and so becomes a communicant at the shrine of Nature and is able to feel what the Psalmist means by his words, 'The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth His handiwork.' "

"Uncle Danny, 'whither thou goest I will go' just to sit at your feet and learn. Good night."

## CHAPTER IX

### THE COLLEGE STUDENT

TOM FOSTER came breezing into Uncle Danny's study one evening as nonchalantly as if he were responding to an urgent invitation—all expenses defrayed. Tom was a bounding sort of chap, altogether sure of himself, and always as airy as if he were conscious that he was playing foot-ball with the world all the while and winning every game. He was so accustomed to success in carrying off situations with his father, his mother, his classmates, and, truth to tell, with the young women of the college that not unlike that other Tommy, the Sentimental one, he felt himself to be masterful if not altogether irresistible. He was by way of being a sort of arresting imperative incarnate and would have felt flattered to hear any one thus describe him. He had a way of projecting himself into situations as if by right of eminent domain but with the qualification that he deemed the obligation to be in his favor. Thus he came into Uncle Danny's study on this particular evening with the air of proprietor, as if he were doing a distinct honor to the house and

all its inhabitants by consuming some of his valuable time in making a call.

But Uncle Danny's philosophy had taught him a thing or two and he knew that Tom's airiness concealed something of vital import and he sensed the fact that the visit had to do, somehow, with Mary Benton. It soon developed that his surmises were founded on fact, for Tom had never learned the art of leading up to a subject by degrees nor of preparing the soil for the seed he was proposing to sow. He was too direct, and too sure of himself for anything savoring of circumlocution. And yet he did not find it easy to state his case. The bold statement of his infatuation for Mary did not seem to him to comport with accepted standards, and to give a recital of Mary's apparent indifference to his advances would have caused a wrench to his self-assurance. Hence he felt rather than thought that, face to face with his dilemma, it would be the part of discretion to walk softly, especially since he knew of Uncle Danny's high estimation of Mary, and also his keenness in appraising delicate situations.

However, he finally managed to say with apparent irrelevancy, "Uncle Danny, I suspect you have noticed or, at least, have heard that I am very much interested in Miss Mary Benton."

"So am I," Uncle Danny quickly responded.

"Yes, but not in the same way."

"Possibly not," said Uncle Danny, "but in the quality and depth of my interest, I yield to none."

"No, of course not, Uncle Danny, but granting all you say, you still can't marry her."

"Certainly not; can you?"

"Check!" ejaculated Tom. "You understand the game of chess, Uncle Danny?"

"Yes, amateurishly; enough to know your word 'check.'"

"Anyhow, Uncle Danny, you do certainly bring a fellow to a standing position with your direct and pointed question."

"That was the intention; but you haven't answered the question yet."

"Well, no; so far as I can make out at the present I can't marry her; but, I assure you, it is from no fault of mine."

"Whose fault then?"

"Hers."

"Why, the obstinate baggage! Whatever can she be thinking of? Here is a fine-looking young man who is rich, popular, a good student, in great demand, and yet, in her intractable pertinacity, she does not give assent to his highly complimentary request."

"Uncle Danny, are you laughing at me?" Tom asked.

"Not at all. I am merely reading your mind. In reviewing the elements of your eligibility I dare say you have included all the things I have mentioned and many others. Am I not right?"

"Yes, you are quite right; I have. But, is there a single item in the list that you would strike out?"

"Yes, riches," replied Uncle Danny.

"But we are rich, Uncle Danny."

"We are not speaking of plural people but of the singular you."

"But it is all the same, for I shall inherit my father's money as well as his business."

"Tom," said Uncle Danny with deliberation, "it may seem all the same to you, but it may not seem so to Mary. You are placing your prospects in the column of assets, but she may be thinking of them as liabilities."

"How can she?" Tom asked.

"Because she is Mary Benton."

"But, Uncle Danny, waiving for the moment your enigmatical language and its real import, whatever that is, don't you see that I am in position to lift Mary up and out of the drudgery of school-teaching and give her the place in society for which she is so well fitted?"

"Just a moment, Tom. I think you are getting your directions somewhat mixed. When a young

man, even Thomas Foster, gets to thinking of lifting Mary Benton up, he is taking on a pretty large contract."

"But, Uncle Danny, you know what I mean. She ought not to be wearing her life out teaching school."

"But why not?" Uncle Danny asked.

"Why, she's too fine for that."

"Oho! So that's your idea? Then, only the coarse ones should teach school? Suppose you were the father of children. What sort of teacher would you want for them?"

"Why, the best to be had, of course."

"Certainly, certainly. Now, Tom, let's go back a bit. You say Mary is too fine to be teaching school; what is she fine enough for?"

"She ought to be the queen of a home," responded Tom.

"Exactly, and I heartily agree. Now, let's follow up this queen figure of yours just a little. The home would be her palace. Isn't that your idea?"

"Most assuredly," and Tom was quite emphatic.

"Very well; we now have the palace and the queen. What else do we need to complete the picture?"

"Check-mate! Uncle Danny, if you are merely an amateur at this game of chess, I beg to be excused

from playing with a professional. So, you think I might not fill the rôle of king in a palace to the satisfaction of all parties concerned, do you?"

"Down brakes! Your Royal Highness, I said nothing of the sort. That was your own suggestion. I merely furnished the opportunity. But since you did suggest it, let's follow the matter a bit further. Just a moment ago you were talking of lifting Mary up from somewhere to somewhere else. I dare say your fiction has taught you to think of her as a star of the first magnitude and the brighest star in the galaxy just as it suggested some one as the queen of the home. Those are very alluring conceits and very fittingly apply to Mary Benton. But this star of yours seems, by your own account, to be a fallen star for she has descended to the lowly drudgery of teaching school. So you are another Lochinvar who is bent upon rescuing the fair and unfortunate maiden and setting her upon a throne in a palace in some enchanted land. Only you are going to transport her in an expensive automobile, and fit out her palace with velvet carpets, lace curtains, mahogany furniture, the rarest china—and then point out all the glories with which you have surrounded her and tell her how thankful and happy she ought to be to have a husband whose father is willing to lavish so much money upon his son, to

use in trying to buy happiness for his wife. That's just what I meant when I said that Mary might regard your father's money as a liability."

"And again I say, Uncle Danny, that I can't understand that view of the matter. Every girl wants a nice home, good clothes, and the means for entertaining her friends. Then, how can money prove a liability?"

"Tom, you have asked a difficult question, and I'm not certain that I can interpret Mary's viewpoint clearly, but I'll try. As you say, Mary is fine, so fine indeed, that mere material things can not and do not satisfy her conception of life. She is so fine that life means far more than furniture, carpets, curtains, and china. She looks upon all such things as a means and not an end. She thinks of all such things as subordinate to the real essence of life. She would scorn the thought of marrying for a home, or for rich raiment, or for the means of entertaining her friends. She yearns to be able to entertain her friends with her mental and spiritual gifts without the aid of material garnishments."

"But, Uncle Danny, you must admit that she gives much care to her personal appearance and is always becomingly attired."

"I grant you that, Tom, but I happen to know that it costs her far less to dress well than it does

others to appear dowdy, just because she uses clothing to help self-expression. She is sincere, and, therefore, her wardrobe must express sincerity. Anything that is bizarre or spectacular jars upon her fine nature. That's just the place where she has an interrogation point over you. She is wondering whether you are not inclined to use money for show purposes and whether your wealth may not contribute more and more to vanity and superficiality. She distinguishes to a nicety between a sincere man and a harlequin or a merry-andrew."

"But, Uncle Danny, she certainly can't object to my dressing in good taste, can she? She doesn't yearn to have me look like a tramp, I hope."

"There, Tom, I was afraid I might not be able to make myself understood. Let me try again by making a personal application. Your creed tells you that clothes make the man and you live up to that creed punctiliously. Mary's creed says that the man makes the clothes and these creeds, as you will readily see, are antipodal. To Mary a suit of overalls seems a king's robe when she discovers a real man inside, while the most expensive fabrics the shops afford seem dowdy to her unless the man inside is big enough and sincere enough to adorn them. And Mary's perspicacity can penetrate the outer husk and appraise what is inside."

Tom was silent for some moments and it was evident that he was getting a new view of life in general and of himself especially with some sidelights on Mary Benton. At length he replied, but with somewhat less assurance: "Uncle Danny, I think I begin to get faint glimmerings of your meaning and of Mary's point of view. But, as to being superficial and less than sincere you must admit that I rank high in all my studies. The grades you have given me will bear out that statement."

"Yes, I recall the fact that you included your college work in your inventory of your good qualities and I admit that your record as a student shows well on the books, but I have been making a somewhat careful study of you to determine, if possible, the motives that actuated you in your eagerness to win good grades and I have reached the conclusion that, in your case, at least, there is such a malady as academic vanity."

"Uncle Danny," Tom replied, "if you would set up as a lexicographer you would certainly be a bright and shining light. But I beg to enter a plea of ignorance as to the meaning of your expression, 'academic vanity' and humbly crave enlightenment."

"Very well, Sir Suppliant. I have the enlightenment ready at hand and shall dispense it generously. The poet says, as you may recall, 'Knowledge and

wisdom far from being one, have ofttimes no connection.' My analysis, so far, has led to the conclusion that you have failed to find the connecting link between knowledge and wisdom. If you could not parade your achievements in the class-room you would disdain to study. But your grades count in your favor in your efforts to become conspicuous in college circles, and you use them just as you do your good looks, your expensive clothing, your automobile, and your father's money. You strive to impress people and are willing even to study to achieve that end. But in your heart of hearts all your lessons are a bore and you care not at all for the wisdom that is supposed to become the resultant of knowledge. When knowledge fails to function in wisdom it is of small moment."

"But, Uncle Danny, I have accumulated wisdom enough to desire Mary Benton," observed Tom.

"Yes, but not wisdom enough to get her, as yet, it seems. And that reminds me that I am sorely puzzled in my efforts to make out whether you desire Mary for what she is or merely because she is difficult to acquire. You have an impelling desire to achieve triumphs and can not brook failure with complacency. So it might fall out, if you would dig down deep into your motives, that you are eager to add Mary to your collection of victories."

"Uncle Danny, the suggestion is unworthy of you and I do not take kindly—"

"Steady, there, steady all! You must study repose of character, Thomas. Let me regale you with an allegory while you are cooling off. Once upon a time a farmer had an apple-tree and on the top-most bough was an apple of surpassing beauty. The farmer's son desired that particular apple most ardently but when the father suggested that he climb to the top and get it he replied that, in so doing, he would soil his clothes and bruise his hands. Then the son suggested that the father get his rifle and shoot the apple from its stem and that he would catch it when it fell."

"All of which has nothing whatever to do with the present discussion so far as I can see," said Tom.

"Which shows," retorted Uncle Danny, "that you have not learned wisdom in the matter of interpreting allegories. Let me venture an interpretation. Mary is the apple, you are the boy who refuses to run the risk of soiling his clothes and bruising his hands, and so importunes his father to use his resources in acquiring the much coveted apple for the son."

"Even your interpretation leaves much to be desired. Can't you now interpret the interpretation?"

"Yes, I can, and I shall be glad to do so. You

desire Mary Benton but are unwilling to make any sacrifices in order to win her."

"Wait a moment, Uncle Danny. What possible warrant have you for a statement like that?"

"Eyesight and common sense—and other things on demand. There isn't a single item in your inventory of qualifications except your good looks and the debatable virtue of your college work that does not emanate from your father. His money has bought your automobile, and your clothing, and his money is paying the bills for your popularity. You want Mary Benton but are unwilling to pay for the ticket to her affections."

"Please be specific, if you insist upon being personal," Tom demanded with some fervor.

"Very well, if you will have it so. Nick, you'd better come alive there, or you'll miss the fun. There may be a near-riot here in the next ten minutes, and it will beat a chipmunk hunt all hollow. But to resume. You smoke cigarettes, and you must have discovered that they are Miss Benton's special abomination. But, knowing that, you go into her presence reeking with the odor and apparently expect her to fall down and worship you including your aroma because you are good-looking, because other girls make over you, because you have on a good outfit of clothing, that never cost you an hour's

effort, and because there is an automobile standing in front that your father bought for you as a sort of unconscious bribe to uphold the family name. If, when you enter her presence there should emanate from her an exhalation as offensive to you as cigarette odor is to her you'd rush from the house and call the police. But you expect her to smile her most winsome smile when you appear before her even though you offend her olfactory organs as poignantly as a garbage-cart. You say she is fine, and so she is, but you seem not to respect her fineness when you exhale odors that are offensive. I dare say she reflects that it would not be pleasant to spend her entire life amid such odors. You see, Tom, it is a question whether you will rise to her standards or bring her down to yours—even in the matter of odors. You say she is too fine to be a teacher. She has it in her power to abate disagreeable odors in her school room, but she can't be certain of a like success in her own home. Mary is innately clean, and sweet, and pure, and any man who would attempt to have her decline from her high standards would not be the man whose name she would take for life."

"But, really, Uncle Danny, I can't make out how you come to have such an intimate knowledge of Mary's standards and modes of thinking."

"With equal propriety, Tom, you might ask how I come to know so much about you. The answer is that I use my eyes and have acquired the ability to add two and two. I find out that in the arithmetic of life it comes out four every time. Only in the case of Mary, she runs in here quite often and tells me many things about herself and some things about you."

"Well, then, what other grievous faults have I besides the cigarette habit?" Tom asked.

"Now, Tom, you know very well that I would never retail to you any thing that Mary has said to me. She has the courage to tell you herself. But I do know some things that she has never mentioned. I know how she must feel about them."

"Well, Uncle Danny, I may as well have the full indictment now that I am here and you have got under way. So proceed with the blood-letting."

"Let us hope that the blood-letting may prove efficacious."

"Amen!" exploded Tom.

"Well, you must recall that night when the boys were celebrating their foot-ball victory. Of course you do, for you were conspicuous in that as you try to be in everything. Mary and I were talking together when the night-shirt parade filed by with all the attendant hooting, yelling, and other discordant

noises. I think I never saw on any human face such a look of intense disgust as I saw on Mary's when you passed. Not a word was spoken but her face told a whole volume. She inwardly revolted at the whole unseemly spectacle."

"But, Uncle Danny, where's the use in Mary or any one else becoming puritanical?"

"Shades of Priscilla! Puritanical! Tom Foster, you know better than I that there isn't a girl in this town who is more resourceful than Mary Benton in contriving good, wholesome, side-splitting fun. Then you talk about her becoming puritanical. She discriminates between good fun and coarse buffoonery—a distinction that you seem either unable or unwilling to make. It does seem as if young men should have learned at home if not in college not to offend the proprieties and good taste under the thin disguise of fun. No one objects to good fun, but Mary Benton showed by her looks that she shrinks from the coarse pranks that you chaps were indulging in that night, in your suggestive attire and with your noise and coarse conduct. I could plainly see that Mary was inwardly thinking that, at last, she was looking at the real Tom Foster and what she saw did not seem to be specially edifying. I hold no brief for Mary Benton, but, if I know her as well as I think I do, she shed tears that night when the lights

were out—tears of sheer disappointment in Tom Foster."

"Why, Uncle Danny, you amaze me. Would she take to heart an innocent lark like that?"

"Innocent fish-hooks! She wasn't crying, if she cried at all, about the lark, as you call it. She was crying because she saw Tom Foster climb down from the pedestal where she had placed him and give an ocular demonstration of the fact that he is as common as the commonest, in fact a leader in the grotesque and well-nigh obscene rowdyism. You see, Tom, Mary Benton is an uncommon combination of daintiness and strength, and anything that is either coarse or weak jars upon her."

"Yes, I can see that now, Uncle Danny, but never looked at it in that light before. Did you ever observe any further confirmation of the feelings that you think possessed her that night with reference to me?"

"Yes, I did. A few days later she and I were walking along the street when you drove by in your machine. You were driving at a furious pace, with triumph written in every lineament of your face, but absolutely indifferent to the safety or comfort of others. You seemed to be saying that the great Thomas Foster was out for an airing and that all others would do well to rush to a place of safety

and admire. There was such a pained expression on Mary's face that it hurt me to see it. You must know, Tom, that a girl of Mary's temperament can not look with favor upon swagger, bluster, or loudness. On that occasion you were exhibiting all these qualities, and seemed to expect people to admire them. Well, Mary didn't admire them. On the contrary, she seemed to bury some of her hopes for you right there. The veriest clown can make a big blare and noise like that, but a gentleman never does, and Mary's face seemed to be bidding good-by to the gentleman she had hoped you would become."

"Say, Uncle Danny, let's call a halt now on the diagnosis and see if there is any remedy. You have given me about all I can stand in the way of diagnosis and I fain would have a recital of your remedy. I'm not sure whether I ought to be electrocuted or merely sent to prison for life. What is wrong with me and what's the remedy? Those are the things I want to know just as soon as you can get them to me."

"Well, Tom, that's a large order. The malady reaches back quite a few years and concerns itself with an indulgent mother and an over-generous father. They have permitted you to think that money will unlock any and every door. But you have come to one now that seems not to yield to the

blandishments of gold and bank-accounts. Again, your parents failed to teach you the nobility of honest work—old-fashioned sweat-provoking work, and you have come to think of yourself as one of the favorites of fortune. In this way you have encased yourself in a veneer of selfishness. You want what you want when you want it, as some song has it, and know of no reason why you should not have it. You have got the notion that everything that you want has a price-tag attached to it somewhere, and only recently have you begun to become conscious that there are some very desirable things in this world that money can not buy. Mary Benton is one of these. It dazed you to learn that your wealth is one of the least of your attractions to her."

"Yes, I know all that, Uncle Danny, but tell me what to do," said Tom with some show of impatience.

"When I tell you what to do I suppose you'll rush right off and have it all done before morning. And on the way home you'll stop in to see Mary and regale her with a noble array of perfectly good and warranted-to-wash resolutions."

"Why, certainly, to all that you have said," Tom responded.

"Then it will be useless to give you a prescription.

Your trouble is so deep-seated that it will require fully five years to bring about a complete cure."

"What! Five years? Why, I'll have been married to Mary Benton long before that."

"So? Well, if I were you I'd do her the honor to gain her consent first. Let me tell you, Tom. Mary Benton may be a wife inside of five years but not yours. If you can make yourself worthy of her in five years you may consider yourself very fortunate."

"But what am I to do? Please tell me that, leaving out the time element. You've been beating about the bush for a long time. What am I to do?"

"Easy. Take two pills."

"Is that all?"

"Absolutely all."

"Fine. What are they? I'll take them both at once," and Tom laughed in great glee.

"First, exalt character above reputation, and second, subordinate your body to the mind and spirit."

"Uncle Danny, are you trying to make a fool of me?"

"Tom, you don't need any help on that job."

"Please name those pills again, Uncle Danny, will you?"

"Get character and don't bother your head about your reputation. Next make your body come under

the control of your soul. Now, run along, Tom, and take both pills at once."

"Wait, I beg you, Uncle Danny. Don't refuse food to one who is starving. If I have the least notion of what you mean it will require a lifetime to take those two pills."

"Come awake, Nick, and look upon a young man who is developing symptoms of wisdom. Very well, Tom, let me explain the composition of these pills. They are closely related. Character is what you know yourself to be; reputation is what others think you are. You have heard these definitions many times but you need to hear them repeated with a personal application. You have been exalting and glorifying your body so long and so much that your soul is becoming emaciated and shriveled. You have carried so many people off their feet with your bombastic swash-buckling that you have come to think yourself invincible till you came face to face with Mary. She sees the puniness of your soul and will have none of you until you have grown a soul that is man-size. She doesn't care to spend a lifetime in the company either of a prig or a snob parading in the garb of a man. Her eyes see through you and back again at a single glance. When you have grown a soul that is big she'll know it without your telling. Some of you college chaps get an

inflated notion of your own importance, but you can't hoodwink the Mary Bentons. They are looking for character and not mere superficial reputation. They are estimating the size of the soul, not the body. You must have known 'Rink' Barrington. He was a star foot-ball player, a star basket-ball player, a star base-ball player, a star singer in the glee club, and a star player in the orchestra. But, in addition to all this, he was a star in the class-room, and still was never less than a modest well-conditioned young gentleman. He had plenty of sail but quite enough ballast to hold his craft steady. Your trouble has been too much sail, Tom, and not enough ballast. As your soul grows you will become sincere, modest, straightforward, upright, and reliable—the very qualities that Mary Benton thinks should characterize a real man. These are the qualities, too, that will bring credit to the American College. And, Tom, I think I would not drop in to see Mary on my way home. You'll hardly know what to say to her. Better take your pills to tone you up for a profitable and pleasant social call. Good night."

"Good night, Uncle Danny. I'll get busy."

## CHAPTER X

### THE ROUND TABLE

Uncle Danny found poignant delight in the company of young men of the college and, especially, of those who had made definite plans for the future. In them he found fertile soil for the seeds of wisdom which it was his pleasure to sow. There was a catholicity in his mode of teaching that set him apart as both more and less than the teacher who must be clothed upon with the habiliments and insignia of his office in order to proceed with his teaching. Uncle Danny was a great teacher because of the informality of his teaching and, for this very reason, he seemed less than a teacher because his best teaching seemed not to be teaching at all. Indeed, the formality of his class-room was but a convenient situation or occasion where and when his students became saturated with the wisdom which his own spirit exhaled. So, it was all one to those who were eager to learn whether they were in his class-room, in his study, or sitting with him on the crest of Sugar Loaf; his teaching was of the same quality, exhilarating and tonic. He talked along in an informal way, without parade, but his sentences

all bore rich cargoes of wisdom. Thus, it fell out that the young men sought his presence with keen anticipations, knowing full well that a session with him meant mental and spiritual refreshment.

So it seemed altogether natural and fitting that three of these young men found themselves assembled in his study one evening, without any preconceived or preconcerted plan. They were there just as iron-filings are at the end of the magnet. Nor was it at all needful that they should offer any explanation of their presence. They were there because they would rather be there than elsewhere and because they felt the need of what they knew they could get there better than elsewhere. They knew, too, that they were sure of a welcome and so did not need to be told. Uncle Danny knew his boys and his boys knew him, and that was the plane of understanding upon which they met in the utmost freedom.

All these three young men had been teachers before going to college and had espoused the work of teaching as their vocation. Indeed, all of them had already secured positions for the next year as village superintendents. This fact, alone, constituted a community of interest and feeling and they were further actuated by a desire to commune with Uncle Danny as a teacher in the full knowledge that his

counsel would be to them as the compass to the mariner. As is the manner of young men who are looking into the future they were all animation in recounting to Uncle Danny and to one another the details of the negotiations incident to their respective elections.

Uncle Danny listened, in rapt attention, to their recital of their pedagogical adventures, for he had traveled the same road in years gone by and could, therefore, react to their offerings with alacrity and understanding. These three embryo superintendents were John Winters, Howard Clifton and Henry Sargent, and they were in full accord in their ebullient enthusiasm over their success in securing positions.

"How long do you boys hope to hold these highly desirable positions you have just secured?" Uncle Danny asked.

"Forever and a day," blurted out Henry.

"Until I'm invited to some lucrative city superintendency," said John.

"How about you, Howard?" Uncle Danny asked.

"I've been meditating upon the possibilities," responded Howard deliberately. "At first it seemed glory enough to be attached to the pay-roll, but I find there is another side to the transaction. I think I learned the meaning of *quid pro quo* from you,

Uncle Danny, and if the school board hands over the *quid* to me I take it they will expect me to hand the *quo* back to them."

"A Socrates come to judgment!" exploded Uncle Danny. "Let Solomon now resign his portfolio and be relegated to private life, for he has been supplanted and, henceforth, we shall consult Howard Clifton. But, seriously, Howard, I commend your perspicacity and your very forceful and unique manner of stating the case. You have sounded the key-note; you have hit the bull's eye the first shot. Many a young man becomes so elated over his good fortune in securing a position that he neglects to consider what he is to do that he may retain it."

"Low bridge!" exclaimed Henry. "Uncle Danny, it is fair cruel to put a fellow out on first base like that."

"Get off your stilts!" retorted John. "Uncle Danny didn't put you out at all. Howard put you out on a foul. That boy Howard is some player at this logic game. You will notice that I played safe in my reply to Uncle Danny's question and didn't leave the gate open for some logician like Mr. Howard Clifton or Uncle Danny to ramp through."

"Oh, didn't you?" responded Henry. "Well, you'd better back up to the station and take another inventory. You're going to stay right on in this

new place of yours till some city delegation marches up to you and presents to you an embossed invitation to come over into their Macedonia and furnish them an uplift? Is that the big idea? You expect the Lord Mayor to head the procession riding a prancing charger all flecked with foam with a mighty concourse of dignitaries attending him, all beseeching you with languishing looks and tearful appeals to—"

"Forget it! Forget it this minute," bellowed John. "Send in your resignation at once to that school board that thought they were getting a superintendent. You're no school-teacher; you're a ranting, melodramatic barn-stormer, and ought to be treading the boards in some fifteen-cent playhouse."

"Act two," retorted Henry, "enter Mr. John Winters, glowering at a carefully worded request for his resignation as superintendent. Act three: The same Mr. Winters is seen driving an ice wagon while waiting for a position as city superintendent."

"On with the dance; let joy be unconfined!" shouted Howard so lustily that Nick became dynamic and punctuated the situation with his best style of barking.

"Order!" called Uncle Danny. "This unseemly conduct does not comport with the high standing

of dignified, sedate school-masters and, besides, you should bear in mind that we have, in this town, both a fire department and a police force—and either of these will respond to a summons from me. Now, with your kind permission—"

"Approved!" shouted Henry.

"——and your undivided attention," Uncle Danny continued, "I'd like to remark that all three of you have come very close to the truth—"

"Hear! Hear!" cried John.

"——even though your answers to my questions were given on the spur of the moment. If we could make a composite of your answers we'd have a pedagogical dictum that would be worthy a place in a book."

"Me for the book-stuff," interrupted Howard. "Go to it, Uncle Danny."

"Well, Howard," drawled Uncle Danny, "that must be a recent development, for I never noticed that you seemed particularly enamored of book-stuff in times past."

"Now let the galled jade wince," exclaimed John. "Uncle Danny, every now and again you do manage to hit upon some great truth."

"Yes, John, I do," he answered, "and if I were inclined to reveal—"

"But, you're not so inclined, Uncle Danny," John

countered. "I can't think of your becoming personal at the present juncture."

"Oh, very well," laughed Uncle Danny, "if you want me to deck you out in the mantle of charity I'll do so on condition that you subside and—"

"Know all men by these presents," John responded, "that I do hereby subside and shall not again this evening fling defiance at the lightning."

"Very well, then," resumed Uncle Danny, "as I was about to say when I was so indecorously interrupted, Henry expects to retain his position forever and a day, John is to stay until a city invites him, and you, Howard, are wondering what you must do to return a *quo* for their *quid*. If I could only condense you three chaps into one—"

"Hooray!" cried John. "Three souls with but a single thought, three hearts that beat as one."

"If I said souls," retorted Uncle Danny, "I hereby withdraw the statement."

"Ouch!" exclaimed Henry. "Howard, will you kindly muzzle that chap Winters in the interest of good manners?"

"Now," said Howard, "shall this Winters of discontent be made glorious summer by this son of Clifton."

"Who's all right?" ejaculated John. "Clifton! Now, Uncle Danny, as you were saying—"

"Yes," said Uncle Danny, "as I was saying, if I could get a chemical precipitate of you three fellows, I'd have a pretty fair school superintendent. I'd like to inoculate each of you with virus from the other two. John is all right in looking forward to a city superintendency, but he needs to consider that he must become a master in his present position before he can ever hope for advancement. And that brings us to Howard's view-point. He is, perhaps, over-cautious and needs to have an access of faith in himself in order to win through. Henry is well enough in his way—"

"Damned with faint praise," quoted Henry.

"Not at all," replied Uncle Danny, "but, Henry, you certainly do not propose to stay forever and a day in one place unless that self-same place becomes larger and larger as the years go by, do you?"

"Not on your— I mean, certainly not, Uncle Danny."

"Ah, so I thought," said Uncle Danny. "Take this town as an illustration. Our superintendent has been here nine years and, in all that time, the town has had no growth to speak of. If a man doesn't grow more rapidly than this town grows he's a pretty poor sort of chap."

"What's the answer, Uncle Danny?" Henry asked.

"The answer is that when he found the town was not growing, he should have shaken the dust from his feet and—"

"Gone as chauffeur on an ice-wagon?" queried John.

"Well, yes, even that rather than to be stricken with arrested development."

"But the antidote, Uncle Danny; what is that?" asked Henry.

"Learn to sing."

"Sing? Sing what?"

"That good old hymn,

> 'Sure I must fight if I would reign,
> Increase my courage, Lord.' "

"But," asked Howard, "What's a fellow to fight?"

"Himself."

"Oh!" all three ejaculated in chorus.

"Yes," continued Uncle Danny, "that epitomizes life—fighting one's self. It has its advantages, too; for there's no innocent bystander to incur harm."

"What are the weapons, Uncle Danny?" Howard asked.

"They are too numerous to mention, but among them may be mentioned books, magazines, space,

sky, rivers, oceans, mountains, and people—especially people."

"Say, boys," said John, "our dearly beloved Uncle Danny is sadly falling into decline. Too bad! Too bad!"

"No, he isn't," said Henry, "he's cryptic, or enigmatic or something like that."

"Wrong, as usual," retorted Uncle Danny. "Henry, you ought to give up this habit of guessing. You're not a success at the game."

"Gentlemen," said Howard, "kindly keep still and permit the dominie to explain himself if he can."

"Very good of you, Howard, I'm sure," and Uncle Danny laughed, "to enter a plea for a driveling old dotard. Bless you, my child. Well, just to afford you chaps the unusual experience of having light filter into your minds, I'll explain in words of one syllable—"

"Primer class will recite," called Henry. "Come on, Nick, you're a member in good and regular standing."

"Yes, people, of course," Uncle Danny continued. "Again and again, people. If you incipient superintendents can only learn to be folks by associating with folks you'll get your pedagogical unnaturalness worn away by the most wholesome sort of attrition. You'll learn to walk down on the ground, where

good folks are and not on academic or pedagogical stilts, as so many school people do, to their own disadvantage. Why, boys, this school-teaching is one of the most human enterprises in the world, and, unless you so regard it, you'll fail, and fail miserably, too. Yes, you must fight yourselves by means of people. You must learn their thoughts, their aspirations, their feelings, and their work in order to live agreeably among them and work effectively with and for their children. You must learn the language of the laborer, the mechanic, the merchant, the banker, and the farmer, or you'll never be at your best as teachers of their little ones. If you chaps ever get to posing as oracles these good people will soon repudiate you, for they soon detect what is genuine and what is spurious. Veneer doesn't attract them. They want you to have a genuine interest in them and in what they are doing. Hence, you will do well to listen while they talk, and not get the habit of parsing words and solving problems every time you meet them."

"Hooray for the folks! I'm for 'em!" exclaimed John.

"Make it unanimous!" said Henry.

"But, Uncle Danny," asked Howard, "while I'm all for the people, with these other dumb-heads, I'm still thinking of your other offensive or defensive

weapons—rivers, space, mountains and stars. Where and how do they come into the great scheme of things?"

"The point is well taken," Uncle Danny responded. "School-teaching, my lad, has a tendency to contract people, to make them narrow, and they need big influences to counteract this tendency. For a part of each day they ought to submerge the teacher part of themselves in the deeps of big things —big books, big thoughts, or big concepts. If you ever contract the habit of chasing after X all day long, up hill and down dale, you ought to climb a tree, or go to the top of a mountain and take a look around. You will soon discover that the X you were racing after is only a puny incident along the way—important, of course, but not important enough to absorb the whole of any one's thought and time. We use X as a means of measuring space, and, therefore, it can not be so big as space. So we'd better contemplate space a part of the day and not let the soul shrivel up. So many teachers imagine themselves Atlas carrying the world upon their shoulders, that they become bent and old before their time from carrying a burden that is wholly imaginary. They live, but they don't have life, for the simple reason that they don't drink from the fountain of life. You recall that sentence in your Latin,

'The mountains are in travail and a ridiculous mouse is brought forth.' I have often wondered how that ancient poet could forecast the modern school-teacher with such accuracy."

"But, Uncle Danny," persisted Howard, "I'm still quite in the dark about that mouse that you lay stress upon."

"Oh, the mouse?" he replied. "Well, we must drag the timorous beastie out into the garish day that you may have a good look at him. Sometimes, the aforesaid mouse takes on the form of a mark, or a grade on a piece of paper. A teacher sits in a room grading papers 'with the whole sky overhead and the whole earth underneath,' forgetful of the fact that sky, and earth, and stars, and space exist and, straining his nerves to the breaking point, and corrugating his brows to the verge of distortion, he at last produces a mouse in the form of a blue semi-colon."

"Wow!" exclaimed Henry. "Pater Familias is by way of becoming sarcastic."

"Henry!" drawled Uncle Danny, "you ought to learn to distinguish between sarcasm and history. I am telling you things that I myself do know. I know some school superintendents, grown men at that, and voters, who spend their time doling out pens, pencils, crayon, and tablets and call their

so-called activity school administration. The mountains are in travail and the mouse emerges in the form of a two-cent pencil. I saw a man driving an automobile the other day at the rate of thirty miles an hour and later learned that when he reached his destination he bought a five-cent bag of peanuts."

"Right this way, ladies and gentlemen," cried Henry, "to get your peanut pedagogy!"

"And your peanut pedagogues," Uncle Danny flashed back.

"Now, will you be good?" queried Howard. "Now, Uncle Danny, please be good enough to go right on, regardless of hysterical interruptions, and tell us, man to man, how we are to achieve, at length, the city superintendency for which our dear John here has such an eager longing."

"That's as easy as pie," said Uncle Danny. "All you have to do is to see big things big and little things little; be vaccinated against professional bigotry; learn the definition of teaching; and put it into practise."

"Shades of Elihu Burritt! Mary Ann's grandmother!" exploded Henry. "Give us the book and let us read it. Easy as pie, is it? Kindly excuse me from a diet of pie. Boys, do either of you happen to know what the distinguished gentleman is talking about?"

"Not either one or both together," said John.

"Uncle Danny, will you reduce the formula to primordial elements, that wayfaring pilgrims may understand?"

"Oh, another thing," said Uncle Danny. "I forgot to warn you against the show element in your school work."

"Uncle Danny," asked Henry, "did you ever, by the remotest chance, happen to come upon the expression 'getting down to brass tacks'?"

"Oh, very often," laughed Uncle Danny.

"Then," replied Henry, "perhaps you may be able to give us a practical demonstration."

"Yes," said Uncle Danny, "may, can, must. You see, young men, if you ever become tainted with professional bigotry you will fondly imagine that your words are oracular, that the course of study you contrive was handed down to you on tables of stone and is, therefore, incapable of improvement, and that when you speak the stars stop in their courses to listen."

"Uncle Danny," replied John, "whatever your professional bigotry is, I'm ag'in' it for your sake, and shall buckle on my armor, lay my lance in rest, and fight the thing to the death."

"Isn't he the bonny champion, now?" mocked Howard. "But, really, I'm eager to hear the oracle interpret the deep and hidden meaning of teaching."

"Let me put a question to you, Howard," said

Uncle Danny. "Suppose, upon going into a schoolroom, you find the teacher using a method that is absolutely wrong, what will you do?"

"Violent supposition, Uncle Danny," said Henry. "He'd never know it was wrong, and would praise her to the skies."

"Cease your prattle, infant," retorted Howard. "Why, Uncle Danny, I'll tell her so to her beautiful face."

"Not in a thousand years!" blurted out John. "Not if her face is beautiful or if you think it is, as will likely be the case."

"I wish," said Howard, "that I could inoculate you two chaps with the germ of infantile paralysis, anything to keep you quiet. What grade are you going to give me on my answer, Uncle Danny?"

"Zero," replied Uncle Danny, "and even that is rather high. No, Howard, you are wrong by a whole diameter just as many others are. They seem to fancy that criticism and teaching are synonymous, whereas they are antipodal. Teaching is forevermore constructive, while criticism is destructive. Teaching opens the mind for truth; criticism closes it. If you criticize the teacher, she will become discouraged, or grow indignant, or weep—all bad, yea, very bad. But, if you find something that

you can commend, she will glow with pleasure and, in time, will slough off the wrong methods in her zeal for the right ones."

"Say, Uncle Danny," said Henry, "you do have lucid moments, after all. Even I can see the force of your reasoning."

"The infant is cutting his wisdom teeth at an early age," said Howard.

"Isn't he, though?" echoed John.

"Now, Uncle Danny," rejoined Henry, "just for the enlightenment of these two neophytes, let's hear you effervesce on the subject of what you call the show element in teaching."

"That, my Henry," Uncle Danny replied, "is the rock on which your craft is liable to be wrecked."

"Hear! Hear!" cried John and Howard in unison.

"Yes," Uncle Danny continued, "you need vaccination against just that frailty. You'll incline to be spectacular and will strive to create a flare and a blare. You'll be inclined to sacrifice safety for speed. You'll be in such a great hurry to achieve distinction, that you'll want to have exhibits and things like that to show the people what a wonderful school man you are. You'll want to rush into the limelight and will incline to discredit all that

your predecessor has done. You will be inclined to exploit both pupils and teachers for your own glory and will be slow to give them the credit for their own work."

"Uncle Danny," queried Henry, "did you ever make a mistake and flay a man when you merely intended to vaccinate him?"

"Well," replied Uncle Danny, "I am an ardent advocate of thoroughness."

"Your practises certainly bear out that statement," Henry replied.

"All that I have been trying to say, boys," Uncle Danny observed, "is that a school man may be dynamic without being pyrotechnic, that he can be pervasive and incisive without being obtrusive."

"Uncle Danny," said Henry, "I now know why Mary Benton calls you the Adjunct 'Celestial Surgeon.' "

"Does she call me that?"

"She does, and often," Henry replied.

"The baggage! She must have been reading Stevenson's *The Celestial Surgeon.*"

"Yes, she has it memorized and repeats it every day. She says she needs it to keep her dynamic."

"Well, it seems to answer the purpose. There are those who could profit by her example."

"Boys, let's go. He's apt to get personal, if we stay," said Howard.

"And boys," said he as they were passing out, "don't contract the habit of telling folks how busy you are. Good night."

## CHAPTER XI

### THE LEGISLATOR

"Oho!" exclaimed Uncle Danny as James Cowan stepped into the room. "I'm to have the pleasure of a chat with a notable, a real name-blown-in-the-bottle Honorable, am I?"

"Gently there, Uncle Danny, gently now," laughed the visitor. "I feel much as I did when I wore a dress-suit for the first time. I had difficulty in living up to my gear, even without remarks from others."

"So the wind lies in that direction, eh? Oh, you'll soon become warmed to your new title and then it will feel as comfortable as an old coat."

"And possibly, look as shabby," replied Mr. Cowan.

"Let us hope not," replied Uncle Danny.

"In that hope I join you most heartily, and that brings me to the object of my visit. I'd like to get your point of view as to the duties of a member of the Legislature. I feel that I must become a member of your class again, and, this time, I'm sure you'll find me far more attentive and responsive

than I was when you were trying to conduct me through the mazes of the humanities."

"Happy is the teacher who has a docile student," said Uncle Danny, with the whole-hearted chuckle which Cowan knew so well. "But, my dear James, what is it that disturbs your equilibrium? You don't take your seat as a member of the Legislature for more than a month and here you are bothering your honorable head about legislative duties already. I've had them come to me a month after they took their seats but never till now a month in advance."

"So," said Cowan, "I seem to be abnormal, do I?"

"No, not abnormal, but different. We must pay due regard to the element of discrimination in our use of words. When you get to making laws you will need to study words in all their shades of meaning. So, I insist that you are different. Many of the men I have known have been so elated over their new titles that they seemed not to have much concern as to the duties and responsibilities that lay just ahead of them."

"Very well, then," replied Cowan, "I'm different. I can't help regarding my new title as a liability and not an asset. It will be an asset only when I make it so. I'd much rather honor the title than to have it honor me."

"Look alive there, Nick!" exclaimed Uncle Danny. "Bestir yourself! You are failing to appreciate your opportunities and your blessings. Come forth from your somnolence and gaze your fill at a new and hitherto unheard-of specimen. Here in your canine and august presence is a legislator who prefers to swallow the whale rather than have the whale swallow him. Nick, we must celebrate this stupendous event. You shall have for your breakfast shredded wheat biscuit with a generous baptism of cream. Your lack of animation does not at all befit this momentous occasion."

"There, now, Nick," exclaimed Cowan, "'tis an ill wind that blows nobody good. If cream is to inundate your shredded wheat biscuit in the morning, my visit here this evening will not have been made in vain. But I fain would hope that you will not be the sole beneficiary of this call."

"Amen!" exploded Uncle Danny with gusto. "Let us hope that in the general distribution of the evening's benefits we may each have a share. But, in particular, my legislative disciple, what brings you hither?"

"I came to sit at the feet of Wisdom and learn of him. If you'll proceed to talk I know I shall learn many things that will redound to my profit."

"In such a baptism of compliments I have the ex-

planation of your overwhelming election. If you conducted your campaign in that strain your competitor had no chance."

"Just a moment, Uncle Danny," responded Cowan. "You are allowing your imagination too loose rein. In my campaign I neither flattered the mothers, trundled the babies, nor gave bon-bons to the children. I talked to the voters in even tones, with no attempt at oratory, and no gesticulation. I told them, as man to man, that, if elected, I'd do my utmost to do the right and shun the wrong. They took me at my word and now you see I must find out from you what the right is."

"Oho," said Uncle Danny, "so that's the way of it, is it? Well, that's a pretty large order for a poor defenseless old man. You ought to recede some centuries into the past and consult some Delphic oracle or something like that. You got off at the wrong station, my boy, if that's the nature of your errand. Why, all these years that have been silvering my hair I've been asking that very question, 'What is right?' and haven't found the answer yet."

"Possibly not, Uncle Danny, but I dare surmise that you can make a pretty close guess. So, I prefer to take chances with you rather than with the Delphic oracle. A man who is right does not go far astray in defining right."

"James," asked Uncle Danny, smiling, "did you ever by any chance visit Blarney Castle?"

"Not guilty," Cowan replied, "but I have spent many hours in your presence, and, if I have been deluded, I'm glad of it. I have come to look upon you as Right incarnate and, hence, my desire to hear you talk a bit."

"But, my dear fellow, it is far easier to talk than to say something."

"Not for you," replied Cowan.

"There you go again! You'll never experience a transfusion of wisdom if you interrupt with seductive blanishments."

"I'm silent," said Cowan.

"And you a legislator? Never!"

"Well, then, as nearly so as a legislator can be."

"Very good, and the amendment is accepted without debate. But, before I begin to exude oracular utterances, let me put to you a few simple questions."

"Enter the school-teacher and the inquisition," laughed Cowan.

"Quite so," said Uncle Danny, "and you'll have occasion more than once, ere the winter is past, to resort to the methods of the school-teacher. Only so will you be able to penetrate the mask of oratory and get at the heart of matters. Well, in the first place,

do you consider it your bounden duty to save the country?"

"Heaven forfend! The country managed to wag along fairly well before my advent upon the stage and will no doubt continue to do so. Just now I'm seeking salvation for myself and not for the country. I'm eager not to impede the country's progress."

"Very good! So far, you recite well and I'll give you a high mark. In the next place, do you have secreted about your person any bills that you are proposing to introduce for the amelioration of mundane affairs?"

"Never a bill."

"Here, Nick, behold a prodigy! A legislator, and not a bill in his clothing! What's the world coming to? How is this degenerate legislator to achieve immortality unless he manages to have his name printed in capitals at the top of some bill? Here, Nick, you see a luminary sinking into darkness behind a cloud of obscurity all because he has no bill in his inside pocket. Young man, for what service are you to draw your munificent stipend as a legislator? I demand an answer."

"Easy, Uncle Danny, easy as pie. I shall extract from the State Treasury the stipend aforesaid as a

slight compensation for my Herculean efforts to prevent legislation."

"Mercy! I cry you for mercy, kind sir! Is it as bad as that? Oh, these degenerate days! Oh, these degenerate sons of the Pilgrim Fathers! Have we descended to such depths of ignominy that we must nurture a young upstart in this country who thinks it his duty to forestall legislation? *O tempora! O mores!*"

"There, Uncle Danny, calm yourself. I rather thought a spasm like that would frazzle out into Latin in the end."

"'Tis a real delight to me, James, to know that you recognize it as Latin whether you know the translation or not. But, forgive my passionate explosion. The audacity and originality of your suggestion carried me out from my moorings, and, for the moment, I forgot that I am a doddering old fossil sitting in the chimney corner, taking no note of passing events. But, even in my feebleness and senility, methinks I can discover in you some symptoms of statesmanship."

"Oh, blessed senility! May your tribe increase! But wherefore, Uncle Danny, and, also, how and why?"

"Well, James," Uncle Danny answered, "I have had no little experience with embryonic legislators

in my time, and your view of your duties is altogether refreshing by comparison. I have had occasion to labor diligently with some of the brethren to get them around to the view that you hold, and, even then, had but indifferent success. The mere election of many of them seemed to elate them to the point of ecstasy and they seemed bent on saving the world whether it yearned to be saved or not. Their first thought seemed to be to sponsor some bill with small regard to its merit. To have their names attached to a bill which provided for the extermination of hawks and musk-rats seemed to them a through ticket to Congress, and I have spent many weary hours trying to puncture their expansiveness."

"And how did they take to the treatment?" asked Cowan.

"Oh, as to that," replied Uncle Danny, "some of the bumptious ones seemed to pity me on the score of my ignorance; but, for the most part, I feel that I can take some credit for legislating by proxy."

"And I hope you'll not abate your efforts in that line during the coming session. But, how do you account for the attitude of the bumptious ones, as you call them?"

"Well, you must have learned, ere this, that logic does not appeal to people who are on dress-parade. Their gaudy plumage seems to be proof against the

shafts of logic. These bumptious ones came to me not to learn wisdom but to hear applause; and when I attempted to vaccinate them against legislative mediocrity and futility, they rebelled, and I must needs hog-tie them before I could apply the vaccine."

"You are rather an adept at the hog-tying trick, aren't you, Uncle Danny?"

"Well, you see, I've had quite a bit of practise, and I'll not deny that I have acquired some skill in the noble art," and Uncle Danny laughed aloud.

"But, Uncle Danny, did the vaccination take?"

"Oh, beautifully, in nearly every case and they lived happily ever after."

"And served a useful purpose in the Legislature?"

"Yes, to the measure of their ability. But you must know, my dear fellow, that many men who go to the Legislature are provincial and can gain no concept of a legislative unit larger than the county in which they live. Such men think in terms of ditches, line-fences, and, as I said before, hawks and musk-rats. Their legislative concepts are all either local or personal and they devote more time to their re-election than to the study of statesmanship."

"But, Uncle Danny, can statesmanship be acquired?"

"Certainly it can. I'd be sorry not to believe that."

"But, how?" persisted Cowan.

"Well, if the Lord has given a man a fairly liberal allowance of brains he ought to be able, by diligent work, to do the rest. You have only to review your history to realize that our greatest statesmen have achieved statesmanship in this very way. Abraham Lincoln's career aptly illustrates the point. But, to become a statesman, a man should slough his provincialism as early as possible. 'Tis a long journey from musk-rats to taxation and from line-fences to tariff."

"Yes, that is clear enough, Uncle Danny, but in the case of a novice, such as I, what course would you suggest?"

"That's a big question, James, but a fair question, none the less. In the first place, a man should be able to think out to the limits of his state. Otherwise his legislative concept will be restricted, and that makes for provincialism. If he stands sponsor for a bill he ought to see to it that it is broad enough in its scope and sufficiently vital in its character to be beneficial to every part of the state, and so not be detrimental to any community. Herein, we find the multiplication table of statesmanship. The man

who can not compass an entire state in his thinking is not a hopeful candidate."

"Very well, Uncle Danny, I see that and think you have made out a good case. But, what next?"

"I commend to your attention, in the next place, the consideration of nothing short of big constructive principles in matters of legislation."

"Meaning?"

"Not mere negations. Propose only such legislation as will get people in the way of doing right things and not merely prevent their doing wrong things. So much of our legislation strives to interdict this or that. You can't legislate men into the Kingdom of righteousness but you can stimulate them to set about trying to work out their own salvation. Legislative bodies seem to be trying to prevent things rather than to promulgate the doing of other things."

"Wait just a moment, Uncle Danny. I'm falling behind the procession. I wish you'd give a concrete illustration."

"Certainly. Here's one. Let us suppose that you pass a law to build good roads. That will obviate the necessity for a law that provides for the destruction of burdocks and briars along the roadside. The farmers along the highway will make the environs harmonize with the road. By raising the standard

of the highways, you automatically raise the standards of fences, lawns, fields and orchards. The farmers will take more pride in the care of their premises and, especially, since the good road induces an increase in the number of people who drive by."

"Well, Uncle Danny, your reasoning is rather convincing, but I still find myself doubting whether the sequences you describe would be inevitable."

"My dear fellow," replied Uncle Danny, "I beg you not to forget your psychology when you enter the legislative halls. You'll have need of it every hour of the day. Indeed, a knowledge of psychology ought to be made a prerequisite for admission to membership in a legislative body."

"Hold hard there, Uncle Danny. I'm in deep water again. I beg you to elucidate."

"Well, if every member of a legislative body understood psychology he would understand how the human mind works and would be able to predicate effects when causes are given. He would then need only to concern himself with causes knowing that definite effects would ensue."

"But, Uncle Danny, such a course would decimate the Legislature."

"Yes, and greatly increase the quality. Ten men with a knowledge of psychology would do more and better work for the state than a hundred men

without such knowledge. As a matter of fact, many members of legislative bodies are a hindrance rather than a help because they lack a knowledge of mind action."

"So, you'd have them go to school to prepare themselves for their legislative duties, would you?"

"I certainly would, and that's just what you are doing this minute if I may be egotistic enough to say so."

"Admitted," Cowan responded, "but that doesn't prove that all legislators need more education."

"No," said Uncle Danny, "nor did I make my statement as sweeping as your implication would indicate. The man who aspires to statesmanship is a diligent student every waking hour of the day. There are those, however, that need more knowledge of the affairs concerning which they have to do. I recall the case of an ignorant boor who managed, somehow, to be elected to membership in our own board of education. He had but the most meager knowledge of books and would probably have considered the Forum a new kind of breakfast food or plug tobacco. The only fact that saved the situation was that he constituted a helpless and hopeless minority and, after he had got himself laughed at a few times, he had the grace to sit silent while the others did the work."

"But how came it that such a man was elected?"

"My dear Honorable, he got the votes."

"But, Uncle Danny, just think how thoroughly inconsistent it is for such a man to be empowered to legislate on matters of which he knows absolutely nothing."

"Hold hard, there, Mr. Legislator, or you'll be tabooed for unethical conduct. I beg you never to express such sentiments in the halls of legislation if you would avert ostracism. You will be expected to look upon your colleagues as omniscient and you will find it a species of treason to do otherwise."

"Was that the attitude of the other members toward the board member whose case you have cited?"

"Well, no, it wasn't, but I wish you had not asked that question."

"But why?" Cowan questioned.

"Because I was a member of the board at the time."

"Oho! So that's where the shoe pinches, eh? Well, did you look upon your colleague as omniscient?"

"I certainly did not. I couldn't and retain my self-respect."

"So you would have me lose my self-respect by not imitating your example?"

"But there were extenuating circumstances. He was such a solemn and hopeless ass that even angels would have smiled if they had happened to look his way in a board meeting."

"So if I can be certain that angels would smile in a given situation in the Legislature, I may do the same and still retain my self-respect?"

"Well, something like that. You will not go far astray in following the lead of the angels, if all reports are true."

"So you think I may find some asininity lurking around legislative halls, do you?"

"I didn't say that, but I have been trying to point out to you the way of danger."

"Check-mate! Say, Uncle Danny, that tongue of yours does have its sharp points, as well as strong ones."

"Well, you see, James, I'm still boy enough not to be able to take a dare."

"A fact that I am painfully conscious of. But I must give you the credit of rendering me more nearly immune to asininity because of this talk. If ever I should become possessed of any quality that approximates statesmanship I shall certainly hark back to this evening. I like your distinction between constructive and restrictive legislation and shall apply the principle throughout my legislative career.

Besides I shall apply that test to every measure that solicits my vote."

"Well, if you do that, you will never go far astray."

"I thank you, Uncle Danny, for your wise counsel and here and now pledge to you my word that I'll never introduce a bill for the extermination of musk-rats. Good night."

## CHAPTER XII

### THE SCHOOL BOARD MEMBER

"COME in, Charles," said Uncle Danny, in his heartiest manner as Charles Thompson appeared at his door one evening. "I couldn't really think that you would ignore your Uncle Danny in these momentous times. Sit there in that easy chair and spread out your thoughts and emotions for my critical inspection. I'm no end glad to see you and, especially, since you are now a member of the board of education."

"Uncle Danny," responded Thompson, "I note that your powers of divination are *in statu quo,* to use your favorite expression. You could always read my mind when I was a student and I see you haven't lost the knack."

"Of course not," said Uncle Danny. "Why should I? But, divination! Superannuated shoestrings! There's no divination about it. 'Tis just ordinary gumption. You came over here to talk of your duties as a newly elected member of the school board. Being a young man of intelligence

you are striving to forecast the situation and hence this visit."

"Quite right, Sir Oracle," laughed Thompson. "But enlighten me still further. What does a board member do?"

"Do?" exploded Uncle Danny. "Do? Well, a lot of them do things for which they will have hard work to get forgiveness. Do? Some of them do things that it takes years to undo. Do? Sometimes they do things that will never be incorporated in their obituary notices."

"Terrible!" ejaculated Thompson. "Uncle Danny, you haven't adopted a diet of vitriol, have you?"

"No, sir, nor dynamite, nor nitro-glycerine. A man needn't fulminate when he's telling the simple truth."

"And yet, Uncle Danny, your language seemed to contain just a dash of the essence of thunderbolt."

"I must have touched the accelerator inadvertently. But I do become wrought up a bit now and then when I get thinking on the subject of school boards."

"And what, Uncle Danny, are the prime characteristics of the right sort of school board member?"

"Sanity and honesty."

"What! As simple as that? In that case, I think I can qualify."

"Don't be too certain of that, my friend."

"You are certainly not indulging in flattery just now, Uncle Danny."

"It doesn't seem very complimentary, I readily concede. But, at rare intervals, I have a spasm of truth-telling, and your evident confidence in me has induced the present outbreak."

"I implore you, Uncle Danny, let in the light."

"Oh, very well. *Fiat Lux.* Some philosopher avers that we are all more or less insane on one or more subjects and it requires a nice balance of powers to be sane all the while in planning for the administration of schools. Again, a great many people seem to think that honesty is an expression of the relation between myself and my neighbor."

"Well, isn't it?" asked Thompson.

"Verily not," said Uncle Danny. Then after a pause that was truly eloquent he continued. "Honesty, Charles, is an expression of the relation that subsists between me and myself. If I can keep that relation right, my neighbor's interests will never suffer at my hands. The honest man is one who can look himself straight in the eyes for three minutes and never blink. If he can do that he is either honest, or else such a calloused sinner that the preacher might as well leave him and ply his trade elsewhere."

"So you think, Uncle Danny," asked Thompson smiling, "that that is one test of a school board member, do you?"

"Yes, that and sanity."

"But, Uncle Danny, I wish you'd explain your conception of sanity in matters educational."

"Certainly, Charles, anything to oblige and to help you to get started right in your new field of endeavor. Let me use you as an illustration."

"Very well, Uncle Danny; anything to oblige."

"Well, as I recall it, you were quite proficient in the sciences, as a student here in college, and, even yet, you probably think that the sciences outrank the other studies in importance."

"Guilty!" confessed Thompson.

"Well, that being true, you will naturally think that every child should, in time, make science his major study, whether he has a natural aptitude for the study or not."

"I confess, Uncle Danny, that I have been thinking that very thing."

"There you have it in a nut-shell," replied Uncle Danny. "You look upon the child who does not incline to science as somewhat sub-normal, a little below par. Most men come into board membership with preconceived notions and proceed at once to modify the school procedure to fit their notions."

"Oh, I see," said Thompson, "and, therefore, they are insane."

"Soft pedal there, Charles. I didn't say just that. Such men are one-sided, or lop-sided, and can see things only from their own angle. They fail to get the child's point of view, and so fail to provide such school facilities as would aid the child to make the most and best of himself."

"Say, Uncle Danny, you ought to write a book on the subject of school boards."

"No use; they wouldn't buy it, and wouldn't read it if they did. I'd have to lure them in here and read it to them. The sane ones do the work all right as it is, and the others are quite satisfied with themselves."

"So you admit that there are some sane ones?"

"Oh, bless you, yes, and they are the very salt of the earth. They can get the child's point of view, the teacher's point of view, and the parent's point of view, and still not lose their own. But, let me tell you, Charles, it takes a big man and a sane one, too, to do that."

"I believe you, Uncle Danny, but I never heard it put just that way before."

"Wake up there, Nick, and see a man who is becoming converted. We are having a revival under our own vine and fig-tree."

"Right you are, Uncle Danny, and the convert is

feeling better and better all the while, as, of course, he should."

"Very good, and the preacher feels encouraged. So let us resume. Once upon a time there was a little boy, named Charles Thompson, a bright and winsome little chap who was forever inquiring into the why of things. He wanted to know why the grass is green, why the sky is blue, what causes the brook to ripple and murmur, and why the grasshopper has six legs. It put his parents and teachers to it to answer all his questions you may be sure. He didn't care specially for music and drawing, because he was so busy thinking about flowers, insects, plants and animals. In college he was accounted one of the most proficient students of science.

"Then he became a man but he did not put away childish things. He revels even now in all things scientific and regards other things with something of disdain. I was fond of him as a child, I was fond of him as a college student, and I am fond of him as a man. But I shouldn't like to have all the men of this community just like him. We'd be over-Thompsonized. And, besides, he'd not be distinctive at all if all our men were Charles Thompsons. Recently, he was elected a member of our school board and I fear that he may incline to discontinue the teaching of music and drawing—"

"Down brakes, there, Uncle Danny, he'll do noth-

ing of the kind, not after such an amiable grilling as you have given him. He might have felt that way if he hadn't dropped in here this evening."

"And if he had," asked Uncle Danny, "would you set up the claim that he possessed the full measure of sanity?"

"I catch the point, Uncle Danny. Even a scientifically inclined member of a school board can get that. You think that society needs a Johnny Jones with his music, a Mary Smith with her art, and a Tommy Brown with his mathematics quite as much as it needs Charles Thompson with his science. Isn't that it?"

"Yes," replied Uncle Danny, "but not all of it. We need Johnny Jones even more than we need his music but we need the music as a means of making of him the best possible Johnny Jones. If you should insist upon forcing the diet that you enjoy upon Johnny he might not thrive upon it and so would never attain his full growth. In that case society would be the loser because there was not sanity enough in the board of education to provide for the native dispositions and individualities of all the pupils."

"And again I applaud you, Uncle Danny, and proclaim you an effective and delightful means of grace."

"Come alive there, Nick, and share in the floral distribution."

"Now, Uncle Danny, I'd like to hear you descant once more upon the theme of honesty. We rather veered away from that in our contemplation of sanity."

"Agreed!" enthused Uncle Danny. "I'm glad you recalled me to that theme. Let's see, you have a little daughter in school, haven't you?"

"Yes, Ruth."

"Who is her teacher?"

"Miss Benton—Miss Mary Benton. You know her?"

"Oh, yes. I know Miss Benton. Good teacher, I understand."

"Yes, very; excellent. Ruth thinks Miss Benton is just about perfect."

"And what does Miss Benton think of Ruth?"

"Well, I have really never inquired into that."

"You asked Ruth the very first day how she liked her teacher, didn't you?"

"Yes, Uncle Danny, we did, but have assumed all the while that Miss Benton shares the opinion of her parents as to Ruth."

"A very common mistake, I assure you, and one that does the parents no credit. You have had a physician for the little one now and then?"

"Yes, occasionally."

"Did you interrogate him as to her condition after the examination?"

"Certainly, and most eagerly."

"Quite right and proper but—"

"But me no 'buts' Uncle Danny, for I am quite able to anticipate what you would say and stand convicted of negligence."

"And how about the honesty?" inquired Uncle Danny.

"Yes, you may amend the indictment to include dishonesty."

"Now, we are making progress," and Uncle Danny chuckled.

"Yes," replied Thompson, "but our progress imposes upon me a high degree of discomfort."

"Which proves that your soul is expanding," flashed Uncle Danny. Then more deliberately he asked, "How much does the physician charge for each of his visits?"

"Two dollars."

"How long does he stay?"

"Oh, something like ten or fifteen minutes."

"You don't think his charges are excessive, do you?"

"Oh, not at all. We are so happy when Ruth

recovers that the doctor's bill seems a mere bagatelle."

"Do you regard Miss Benton as expert in her line as the physician in his?"

"Why, I really never thought of that, but I dare say she is."

"Yes, I, too, dare say she is and I'm quite of the opinion that this is worth thinking of. Do you know what Miss Benton's salary is?"

"Yes, one of the board members told me she receives fifty dollars a month."

"I'd wager a hair from Nick's tail that he was suggesting retrenchment when he told you."

"You are quite right, Uncle Danny, he was."

"And you agreed with him?"

"Well—er, yes, I did."

"Of course, you did. Retrenchment is the very first germ to bite a board member. Every fellow thinks he is elected to save money."

"Well, isn't he?"

"Not by a million kilometers," Uncle Danny retorted.

"For what else, pray?"

"Why to spend money; to spend more money; and then to get more money to spend. If you chaps were elected to save money, the matter would be

simplicity itself. You could close the schools and so save it all."

"Uncle Danny, your logic seems conclusive but I'm sure there must be a flaw in it somewhere."

"Well, you might take a day off and look for the flaw. But, what is the length of the school year?"

"Nine months."

"So Miss Benton receives four hundred fifty dollars for a year's work. Is that right?"

"Yes, Uncle Danny, you shine resplendent in the domain of multiplication."

"I'm equally expert in long division and have discovered that for each of the three hundred sixty-five days of the year Miss Benton has a fraction more than one dollar and twenty-three cents for all expenses, boarding, clothing, books, summer school, and incidentals."

"But, Uncle Danny, she boards at home."

"I thought I'd trap you into saying that. You have been effectively coached by members of the board. I can see that clearly. So only such teachers as board at home are eligible to positions in our schools. Is that the way of it?"

"Not at all, Uncle Danny, not at all."

"But, suppose Miss Benton were paying for her room and boarding, with accessories, how much do you think it would cost her?"

"Not less than five dollars a week at the very least," Thompson replied.

"Just so, and that would aggregate two hundred sixty dollars a year which would leave a balance of one hundred ninety dollars for all other expenses. Is that honest? Or is it honest to compel Miss Benton's parents to support her, in the main, that she may teach your child? Is it honest to dole out to her for a whole day's expenses only a little more than half of what you give to the physician for a visit of fifteen minutes? Is it honest to rank the physical part of your child so much above the mind and heart?"

"I cry you mercy, Uncle Danny. I have all I can carry now, and more. I never imagined I was letting myself in for such a castigation when I asked for more light on the subject of honesty."

"Well," and Uncle Danny laughed, "the blood be upon your own head. You invited the whirlwind and courted the lightning and so you must absolve me from blame in the matter. But I do think the castigation as you so aptly term it will inure to the benefit of our schools. By the way, Charles, that little girl of yours is a sweet child and Mary Benton loves her as her own."

"Why, how do you know that, Uncle Danny?"

"Well, Mary comes over here quite often to talk

over school affairs with me, and, besides, I frequently visit her school and never fail to see Ruth and make inquiries about her and her progress."

"And here I've never visited the school and scarcely know Miss Benton."

"Well, she's worth knowing," replied Uncle Danny, "and you've been missing something. But I am wondering if you don't sometimes put Ruth to bed at night."

"Oh, very often, and 'tis a great lark for both of us."

"Just as it ought to be," said Uncle Danny. "Well, the next time you have a lark of that kind I wish you'd sit on the edge of the bed and keep your gaze fastened upon her until she drifts away into dreamland."

"But, whatever for, Uncle Danny?"

"Oh, it will be good for your soul. As you sit there watching her I wish you'd ask yourself what sort of teachers you want her to have all through her school life, what kind of a school-room you'd like to have for her during the time, what sort of books and equipment you think she is worthy of, what knowledges you'd like to have her acquire, and what sort of environment, in general, you'd wish for her."

"And then what, Uncle Danny?"

"Then it will be recess-time and the little boy may run out to play."

"What game shall the little boy play, Uncle Danny?"

"The game of make-believe."

"And how is that game played?"

"Why, make believe that every child is as dear to its parents as Ruth is to hers—that every other child has the same right to the best teachers, and, in short, the best of everything pertaining to school that you wish for your own child."

"That's another phase of your conception of honesty, is it, Uncle Danny?"

"It certainly is. When you are looking into the face of Ruth lying there in her bed you are looking at yourself, and your attitude toward this other self must be your attitude toward your neighbor and your neighbor's child, if you are actuated by the feeling for downright honesty. You want the best teachers for Ruth, not the cheapest ones, the best books for Ruth and not the cheapest ones, and the best environment for Ruth, not the cheapest."

"Uncle Danny, you are certainly a logician as well as a philosopher and friend. I see my duty as a board member now as never before."

"Good," exclaimed Uncle Danny. "I now realize, since that is true, that I have not lived in vain.

Patriotism forevermore implies sacrifice, and a patriotic board member must give his time and his strength generously without hope of other reward than the satisfaction of seeing his neighbor's child have the right sort of life in school as well as out. I have no patience with the doctor who uses his membership on the board of education to win more patients or the merchant to gain a greater volume of trade. They are polite tyrants and not patriotic members. And here endeth the lesson on honesty."

"Long live Uncle Danny," was Thompson's exclamation of applause.

"Wait a moment, brother. This volume has an appendix," Uncle Danny responded.

"Very well, Uncle Danny, by all means let us have the appendix. My corns can not hurt any worse for a little more tramping and I may as well take the full treatment, now that I have survived it so far."

"Well," continued Uncle Danny, "there ought to be an educational test applied to every candidate for membership to a board of education. It is incongruous for a man to have a vote on school matters in which he has had no experience. How in the world can a man vote intelligently on the subject of algebra or chemistry who has never studied them? If a man has never attended a high school he must

depend upon some one else for his opinions on high-school work and that renders him a nonentity or, at best, a mere echo, and the school régime is too important to depend upon echoes."

"But, Uncle Danny, where does democracy come in on your novel scheme?"

"As to that," Uncle Danny replied, "democracy will step up to a higher plane and will be all the better for the elevation. Impose such a test as I have indicated, and you put a premium upon board membership and, at the same time, stimulate the work of the school by serving notice that the uneducated man is barred."

"I'm glad, Uncle Danny, that on that score, at least, I can qualify. But is there anything else on which I specially need coaching?"

"Yes, just one thing more, and that is the humanitarian aspect of school work. We shall never have things right so long as we overcrowd our schoolrooms. Twenty pupils ought to be the maximum number of pupils for any teacher, if we are to foster the individuality of the children and relieve the teacher from insidious suicide. We want our teachers to be bright, alert, healthy, animated, and happy, and yet we drag them down with the care of thirty-five or forty pupils. This is nothing short of cruelty to the teacher and positively unfair to the children.

Then, along with this reform toward civilization, we should forever banish the rigid desk in which we imprison the bodies and spirits of the pupils. These desks restrict their freedom and freedom is one of the prime qualities in education."

"I see, I see," said Thompson at length, "just as I see many things that had never occurred to me as I have tried to forecast my duties as a member of the board, and I hope, Uncle Danny, that you will watch my career closely that you may realize that your efforts in behalf of a saner administration of school affairs will have my heartiest support. Only so shall I be able to reveal to you my gratitude for this evening. I hope you may come to know that I am playing your game of make-believe to the profit of all the children. Good night."

# CHAPTER XIII

## THE RURAL TEACHER

"UNCLE DANNY," said Louise Maynard as they sat together one summer evening on the spacious veranda of the farm home of Homer Cook, "I do wish you'd regale me with one of the lessons in pedagogy for which you are so famous."

"Famous?" exploded Uncle Danny. "Who put such nonsense as that into your beautiful, even if empty, head?"

"Why, Mary Benton, of course. Who else? She says you're a dear when it comes to telling folks how to teach school."

"What! Mary Benton? Did that pert mite of impertinence incarnate have the effrontery to apply such an opprobrious epithet as that to me?"

"She did, indeed, and I glory in her effrontery," replied Louise.

"What! *Et tu Brute?* And you take sides with that defamatory Benton person?"

"Oh, not violently; at least, not yet. I'm suspending judgment until I find out whether you are

going to give me the lesson in pedagogy of which I stand in such dire need."

"Aha! Coercion I see. You bear a flag of truce and unless I capitulate, you will fire when you are ready, Gridley! I suppose you call that an ultimatum, eh? Well, let me tell you something in the strictest confidence: You and Mary Benton are both in greater need of a lesson in decorum than of pedagogy. Think of it! Two girls like you calling a susceptible fledgling like me a 'dear.' Did any one overhear you?"

"Yes, indeed, quite a few. In fact Mary and I are your publicity agents. But be composed, Sir Fledgling. You can live it down if you are circumspect from now on and begin right away telling me how to teach school."

"Oh, Persistency! Thy name is Louise Maynard. But, look here, young woman, isn't your school closed for this year?"

"Why, of course, it is, oh, thou retarded and benighted one."

"Well, then, thou pestiferous and epithetical baggage, what in the name of Pestalozzi, Froebel, and Nathan Schaeffer, are you bothering your head about pedagogy now for?"

"Who are these chaps whose impressive names you bandy about so glibly?"

"Oh, friends of mine whose acquaintance you will do well to cultivate."

"Oh, well, there's time enough for that. What I want now is pedagogical treatment in anticipation of my work next year, for I would break the news to you gently that I have been re-elected."

"So they're giving you another chance to make good, are they?"

"Sir!"

"Well," continued Uncle Danny, after his laughter had subsided, "if you are so anxious for a cargo of pedagogy, why aren't you attending some summer school?"

"I can easily enlighten you on that subject. If I can only manage to extract my cargo of pedagogy from your vast store-house I'll save the tuition fee at the summer school. Besides, I'm busy," she responded.

"Busy? Busy at what?" and Uncle Danny's laughter echoed in the grove across the road.

"Why, Sir Inquisitive, I'm busy earning my board and keep."

"Did you say earning?"

"Yes, sir, I said earning and I meant earning."

"And what do you do, pray, by way of manifesting this vast earning power?" he asked.

"Well, sir, I ought to resent the implication in

your word *vast* but my inherent amiability interdicts resentment, just for the present, for I want you to know that I cook, sweep, dust, wash dishes, make beds, bake bread, milk cows, gather eggs, help with the weekly washing, and, sometimes, while I'm resting, pull weeds in the garden."

"Help! Help!" roared Uncle Danny so lustily that Nick was aroused from his slumbers on the rug and set up a furious barking by way of participating in the general excitement. The noise evoked the presence of Mrs. Cook, who made instant inquiry as to the cause of the hubbub and it fell to Uncle Danny to make the needful explanation. At the conclusion of his recital Mrs. Cook with amiable ardor said, "Yes, Uncle Danny, she does all that and more. It is really astonishing how much work she can turn out in a day; and the best of it is she never lets it ruffle her temper, but seems to think she is having a lark all the while."

"It *is* a lark," replied Louise.

"Most girls would call it a raven or some other bird of ill-omen," laughed Uncle Danny.

"Not Louise," said Mrs. Cook. "She's another Pollyanna and keeps us all in a state of gladness no matter how hard the work is."

"Why, that's the way to make the work easy," Louise volunteered.

"Look here, young lady, I wish we might achieve a universal acceptance of your gospel of work by the world and the people thereof," said Uncle Danny with his significant chuckle.

"Wherefore, Uncle Danny?" Louise asked.

"Why for the best of reasons," Uncle Danny made answer. "If people could only work in a perpetual state of gladness they would do better work and more of it. You must have noted that fact in your school work. When you see a pupil—"

"Just a moment, Uncle Danny," interrupted Mrs. Cook. "If the teachers' institute is in session I'll ask to be excused and shall retire into the interior."

"And leave me to bear it all alone?" asked Louise.

"Oh, you'll survive it, I dare say," replied Mrs. Cook. "You are richly endowed with the power of endurance."

"Madam," said Uncle Danny with feigned irritation, "I take it that you realize that I am a guest in your home."

"I do, indeed," she replied, "and I thought I made it clear that Louise has taught me to be glad even in the most trying ordeals."

"Nick, bite that awful woman," roared Uncle Danny as Mrs. Cook, laughing, rushed into the house.

"Was ever a poor defenseless man so put upon by

a pack of women?" and Uncle Danny groaned in mock seriousness.

"You poor man," sympathized Louise. "I fear me that all this feminine persecution may stunt your growth or make you a misanthrope, or even a woman-hater."

"Possibly I may be able to avert such a dire calamity," he responded, "if I'll only imbibe a large intake of gladness from your glad presence."

"Hooray!" she cried. "Let us bark and frisk and make merry, Nick, for Uncle Danny is himself again. Let's see, what was it you were saying when the excitement began? Oh, yes, you were speaking of enjoying work."

"Yes, so I was," he replied. "Elbert Hubbard once said that 'Art is the expression of a man's joy in his work,' and I like the sentiment. A boy will do his arithmetic well and artistically if you only see to it that he is enjoying himself while doing it. If you are enjoying yourself while washing the dishes you will do the work better and complete it in shorter time."

"That's true as true, Uncle Danny. I have taken over into my kindly care a bed of lettuce out in the garden, and I keep it absolutely innocent of weeds and go out every morning just to enjoy myself look-

ing at it. I suppose I'll come to be a lettuce-artist all in good time."

"You are near the promised land right now, young lady," said he, "for the gladness of your tones proclaims you artistic. Now, if you can keep your pupils feeling the same sort of gladness over cube root and passive voice that you experience when working in your lettuce-bed they'll become cube-root and passive-voice artists."

"Why sure enough, Uncle Danny; of course, they will. I never thought of it in that way, however. Why, that's as good as pedagogy."

"As good as pedagogy, indeed! Why, bless your heart, child, that is pedagogy, bed-rock pedagogy, and of the very best quality."

"Why don't they print that kind of pedagogy in the books, then?" she asked earnestly.

"Oh, give me something easy, won't you? I suppose these chaps who write the books never felt the joy of a lettuce-bed. If they had, they'd write works that people could understand and put into practise."

"Why don't you write a book on pedagogy?"

"I hope to do so some day, when I've worked out some of my theories on you and Mary Benton."

"So we are specimens in your pedagogical laboratory, are we? Well, I like that."

"So do I," he laughed. "Now, Louise, I'd like to learn, if you feel free to tell me, why you are spending your vacation here on the farm. Oh, I'm well aware that all the members of this Cook family are refined gold and all that, and that your lot is cast in a delightful environment, but there must have been something else in your thought when you came to your decision."

"Indeed there was, Uncle Danny, and I'm glad to reveal to you the whole matter, without reservation. Do you think you can stand the shock?"

"I'll try to be heroic," he replied.

"Well, I want to become country-minded," she explained. "You see, Uncle Danny, I was reared in town and knew nothing of country life before coming to live in this charming home. At first, I seemed quite out of it all, and it made me uncomfortable. I didn't understand the language of the farm, and so could not take an intelligent part in the conversation of the family here or of my pupils at school. So I determined that I'd learn the language at all hazards and here I am in my linguistic quest and having the best time an unsophisticated schoolma'am ever had."

"Bravo!" cried Uncle Danny. "Why, I'm proud of you! You have the whole gospel of pedagogy in a corner and it just can't escape. That's quintessen-

tial pedagogy. In sooth, you have the high-brows backed off the stage."

"Mercy, Uncle Danny, aren't you using slang?"

"Oh, am I? Well, you see I call it reversion to type. Our ancestors, we are told, were monkeys, and had a language of their own as they chattered and chaffed among the branches of the trees. When I become excited I forget that I am civilized and revert to the monkey-language of my forebears. That explanation ought to condone the offense."

"Uncle Danny, I really believe you could explain away original sin if you found you had any of that commodity lurking anywhere in your interior department."

"Well, my dear, that would be an easy way to get rid of the thing, or stuff, or whatever it is. But, really, I must commend your plan of learning your pedagogy by the laboratory method. I can plainly see that, next year, you will be able to speak the language of your pupils and that will make them glad as well as yourself. You are trying to lead them over into your world of thinking, of aspirations, of feeling, and of work, and, in order to do this, you are going over into their world. So, you will be able to lead them out of their world into yours just as Moses led the Children of Israel out of Egypt. First of all, he had to know them and

their language in order to become a real leader of them. Some teachers try to drive their pupils out of Egypt simply because they haven't learned the knack of leading and then, when the boys and girls balk, they bombard them with epithets. Then the superintendent or school board must come in to quell the riot—"

"Uncle Danny, you certainly have the gift of serving your pedagogical pabulum in picturesque style. I like both the form and the taste."

"Thank you, kind lady, for your delicious cookie. But, again, I rise to remark that your pupils will eat out of your hand next year because you will be one of them in knowledge, interest, and feeling, and they will gladly follow your lead. When you talk with knowledge about potatoes, corn, cows, pigs, and chickens—"

"Don't forget the cherries, Uncle Danny."

"Cherries? I haven't heard tell of any cherries. There are no cherries in the picture so far."

"Well, there will be. Know, then, kind sir, that I, even I, picked a bushel of cherries right off the trees, pitted those self-same cherries, and canned them, too. No help had I at all in this great enterprise and I am proud of my achievement. Of course, Mother Cook showed me how, but I did all the work myself. And you are to have at least

one can of my beautiful cherries for your very own."

"You express yourself most lucidly, my pastoral friend, and I take great pleasure in your verbal offerings and shall have no less pleasure when the can is opened and the cherries billow forth. They will recall to me the Red Sea and will remind me how expert you are in leading your folks out of their Egypt and they and I will call down blessings upon you for learning the cherry language."

"Well, upon my word, Uncle Danny, I never imagined that such a simple statement as I made anent a can of cherries would open the flood-gates for such a linguistic deluge."

"Well, you see, my mouth began to water and—"

"Uncle Danny, will you kindly escort Miss Louise Maynard into the parlor?" interrupted Esther Cook, the daughter of the house, who at that moment appeared at the door and spoke in tones of one having authority. "We have all been waiting for an hour for you two pedagogues to finish your shop talk so that Louise might play for us."

"Oh, very well, Miss Autocrat," replied Uncle Danny, rising, "since you command we can do no less than obey. But, if you think we have exhausted the subject of pedagogy, you are sadly mistaken, and I promise myself the pleasure of another pedagogical

session to-morrow evening. Now, Louise, let us see whether you are as adept at the piano as you are in a cherry orchard."

"You'll very soon be satisfied on that point, Uncle Danny," Esther replied, "for she is accounted a wonder in these parts. How she has ever learned to play so well with all the other things she has accomplished is more than I can make out. She has reduced me to the plane of an amateur. But come and know for yourself."

During the next half hour Esther's prediction was fully verified and her praise of Louise's skill was abundantly justified. She played as a bird sings, joyously, naturally. Her soul streamed out through her fingers and thus gave a feeling of exaltation to all her auditors. She accepted their thanks and congratulations with becoming ease and grace and then advanced to other topics of conversation as if nothing out of the ordinary had happened. Her attitude won Uncle Danny completely and he found himself inwardly congratulating the girls and boys of that community upon their good fortune in being privileged to live in such an atmosphere as Miss Maynard would inevitably generate.

The conversation, at length, turned to country life and Uncle Danny became expansive in sounding the praises of the appointments of the Cook

home, extolling, particularly, the electric lighting system which had but recently been installed. Whereupon Mr. Cook explained, "You see, Uncle Danny, we have been contemplating the installation of such a system for some time but were awaiting its development to something approaching perfection. We find it quite a success now and eminently satisfactory."

"Indeed, it is, Uncle Danny," said Mrs. Cook, "and you can scarcely imagine what a change it has wrought upon our dispositions."

"What," exclaimed Uncle Danny, "it has changed your dispositions? Fair hostess, I need more light, at this moment, than your modern electric system can possibly afford. Will you not kindly illuminate my benighted intellect with the effulgence of your superior wisdom? What, in the name of Thomas A. Edison, has this new system of lighting got to do with your dispositions?"

"Now, mother," said George, the fine up-standing nineteen-year-old boy of the family, "you have a chance to pit your philosophy against a philosopher who is town-bred. Do try to uphold the family name. But bear in mind that your protagonist is a college professor and you will need to use language that is simple and—"

"Here, Nick, do your duty," exclaimed Uncle

Danny. "Go right over there and bite a pound of flesh from the calf of that fresh upstart's leg. He needs to be reduced. Never you mind, young man. Just wait till you come into my class again and I'll teach you some other things besides the humanities."

"Oh, all right, Uncle Danny," replied George. "It will not be the first time you have given me gratuitous treatment. But go on, mother. This is your inning."

"Small chance for a mere woman," she said, "when loquacious men once get the floor."

"Hear! Hear!" cried Homer Cook while Nick cavorted about barking furiously to accentuate the general hilarity.

"The men and dog will now subside and give the women a chance," said Esther. "Now, go on, mother, and smother this college person with your sage philosophy."

"Well, you see, Uncle Danny, or, at least, you will, I hope, by the time I have concluded this dissertation, that life requires light. Where light is, there life abounds. Darkness makes for gloom, and, therefore, for the absence of abounding, joyous life. People and other flowers—"

"Rah! Rah! Rah!" cried George. "People and other flowers. Pretty good, mother. That lets me in."

"Flourish in the light," continued Mrs. Cook, ignoring the interruption of George. "During the day we were all cheerful and happy, and especially after Louise came into the home as a source of joyous light—"

"Three cheers for the 'source of joyous light,'" roared George, "and a tiger!"

"But," she continued, "when night came and we were doomed to the eclipse produced by a dim, smoking lamp, we became silent and morose. Conversation became constrained and reading was well-nigh impossible. But since our light plant was installed—"

"I move to make it unanimous," cried Uncle Danny. "I'm a convert to the gospel of light. Long live the light plant and the tribe of Cook!"

"But, wait a minute, Uncle Danny," she continued, "we haven't come to the 'finally brethren' yet. I would fain descant somewhat upon the theme of subjective light for your edification."

"Go to it, mother!" roared George. "Now you have him on the hip. Give it to him hard. He's abused your beloved son no end of times, and here's where the law of compensation gets in its work. Give him a heroic dose of subjective light. He needs it."

"Pardon my wayward and irreverent son, Uncle

Danny," she responded in level tones, "but the sins of the father, you know—"

"Police!" roared Homer Cook, springing from his chair.

"Votes for women!" cried Louise, and seizing Esther from her sitting posture they danced about the room in fine abandon while Nick furnished the applause.

In time the storm abated and Mrs. Cook resumed. "If I may now have the undivided attention of this very courteous audience I should like to remark that subjective light is ofttimes induced by objective light. I take it that the bright light of this room is seductively responsible for the good cheer of the present company. But, still further, subjective light is very often a sequence of personal experiences. Before we had our new plant and the motor attachment by means of which we do our washing, our pumping, our churning, and the like, our personal experiences were such that the subjective light was quenched by physical weariness. Whereas, now —but you can see for yourself, Uncle Danny, there isn't one of this company who acts as if he had done a stroke of work this day,—all because we have machinery to do the hard work and that fact predisposes us all to the generation of subjective light."

"Mother forever!" cried George. "There, Uncle

Danny. Take that cargo back to town with you when you go and see what you can make of it. But keep in mind that it is protected by copyright and if you ever attempt to work it off on us in class I'll divulge the source of your information. Get me?"

"Why, yes, I get you," drawled Uncle Danny, "and I'll get you many times more before you graduate."

"If he ever does," ejaculated Esther.

"And whyever not?" queried Louise. "Of course, he'll graduate."

"Well," said Esther, "he's becoming so obsessed with this cooperative farming scheme that he and father have devised or evolved that I can't see how he can get away from home long enough to graduate."

"Do my ears deceive me?" asked Uncle Danny. "What is this cooperative farming scheme that this comely female has suggested?"

"Oh," said Esther, "Dad and Boy have effected a partnership of some sort so as to obviate the necessity of Boy's asking Dad for spending money."

"And a good plan it is," explained Mrs. Cook. "I wish all fathers were as sensible as my husband."

"Hooray!" cried George. "Good old dad! Good old momsey! If there is one of my parents that I love more than the other, it is the other one."

"Look here, Pardner," said Mr. Cook, "that sounds positively incoherent to me, and you must bear in mind that there is a college professor present."

"Bother the professor!" retorted George. "He's no cannibal. I fear him not, especially out here on the farm. If we can keep him out here a few weeks I really think he may become civilized."

"Amen!" shouted Uncle Danny.

"But, dad, about this love business, were you ever incoherent when you were talking of love?" George asked.

"Better ask me, George," said Mrs. Cook, "for I can speak *ex cathedra.*"

"What does that mean, mother?" George questioned.

"There, I told you he'd have to go back to college," and Louise was the speaker. "Just to think, he's been studying Latin with Uncle Danny and doesn't know what a simple thing like that means."

"Why, you inpertinent excess baggage!" retorted Uncle Danny. "If that boy only knew one-tenth of the things that it is possible to learn in my class you'd certainly feel pretty lonesome in his presence."

"Oh, I don't know," Louise replied coolly, "I don't feel oppressively lonesome even in your august presence."

"Ouch!" George exploded. "The Ahkund of Swat got swat; that's swat."

"Is there no longer any reverence for old age in all this wide world?" moaned Uncle Danny.

"Old age, your collar-button!" exploded George in reply. "There is no old age on this farm. Here you find the fountain of perpetual youth. Just look at dad, there. He can drive a tractor all day and then, after a half hour in the bathroom, come forth as ruddy as a sixteen-year-old and as spick-and-span as Beau Brummel. And momsey there; why, she's the Queen o' the May three hundred and sixty-five and a fourth days every blessed year. And there's Louise. No one knows how old she is, but there are times when she is as frisky as a girl."

"Avant!" cried Louise. "Can't some one suppress that too much animated lump of protoplasm?"

"So, George," said Uncle Danny, "I take it that you expect to be a farmer."

"For once you are right, Uncle Danny," George replied. "I certainly do. Town is no place for me. Yes, I want all the languages and sciences that the college gives, and I can find use for all of them right here on the farm. The more mathematics and history I know the better farmer I shall be. I can be a farmer and a man at one and the same time, if I have the situation sized up right. I can work eight

hours a day, sleep eight hours a day, and still have eight hours each day to grow a soul. None of your offices, or banks, or factories for me. We have sky out here, Uncle Danny, both day and night, and I prefer sky to sky-scrapers. We have grass, too, and trees, and space, and these beat your stuffy city all hollow. We have things to eat, also, and mother and these two artists to cook them."

"Yes, Boy," said Uncle Danny, "and you have God out here, too."

"Verily, Uncle Danny," said George, "but, as to that, God is wherever my mother is."

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE OLD LADY

NOT to know Aunt Serena was to argue one's self unknown. One might not know Mrs. Serena Maynard but it was necessary to know Aunt Serena or a passport to the inner circle of her neighborhood was withheld. Uncle Danny had never seen her until they came face to face on the Cook veranda. Yet he knew her and had known her for long. He had long since accepted her at the appraisement of Mary Benton and Louise Maynard, her granddaughter. When they met, therefore, on that balmy evening in the poetic twilight they met as friends and not, by any means, as strangers. The conversation proceeded as if it were a continuation. Their spirits were attuned to each other and preliminary formalities were impossible. It is ever so with people who understand but never so with those who do not. Aunt Serena and Uncle Danny had understanding and that told the whole story.

"Aunt Serena," said Uncle Danny, "it would be easy to rhapsodize on this place and upon this evening."

"Now, wouldn't it?" she replied. "But as to that, Uncle Danny, it were easy to rhapsodize upon life as a whole, this place and evening included."

"Which proves you an optimist," Uncle Danny ventured.

"Oh, that, of course; but in my private dictionary optimism is a synonym for good sense," she responded.

"I must have a copy of that dictionary if possible," laughed Uncle Danny.

"Not possible," she answered, "and if it were you might not be able to read it. Every one must make his own dictionary, Uncle Danny. In fact, every person is a lexicographer, willy-nilly, and that constitutes his life-work."

"Nick," said Uncle Danny, "you and I seem to be on the verge of a new definition of life. So you think, Aunt Serena, that life is the process of making a dictionary for one's self?"

"Exactly so," she replied, "and it is a most fascinating and exhilarating experience."

"You seem to find it so. Is that your fountain of perpetual youth?" he asked.

"Yea, verily," she said, "and I can commend its salubrious waters. People who drink from this fountain cease to talk in terms of years and talk only in terms of days. To them each day is a new

day, fresh from the mint where days are coined, and differs essentially from all other days. Each day has a content all its own and, therefore, the dictionary grows a bit."

"Aha," cried Uncle Danny, "methinks my feeble intellect begins to discern faint glimmerings of your secret of making a lexicon."

" 'Tis no secret of mine, Uncle Danny, or, if it is, I'd be glad to share it with others, if I only could. There's no patent on it. I sometimes wish there were. It might serve to excite interest, to say the least. I can't understand how people can think that to-day is a duplicate of yesterday, and I long to have them see their mistake. But if they can't see it without help, then any help seems unavailing."

"There doesn't seem to be any place in your philosophy for monotony, Aunt Serena."

"Monotony? Well, I have lived in this blessed world something more than seventy-nine years and haven't discovered any monotony as yet. If ever I find life becoming a monotone I shall proceed to take myself in hand and shake myself up a bit. Why, Uncle Danny, there is no word 'monotony' in my dictionary, nor can the word ever get in without my consent. Each day is exactly what I make it, and I find each day entirely too short as it is without anything savoring of monotony."

"But suppose, Aunt Serena, that you do the same thing in the same way—"

"But I don't," she flashed back. "That's the very point. If I did, one day would be very like another. Some women grumble and complain about darning stockings, but I revel in it. I try a new way of doing it each time, or I make that a suitable occasion for learning a new bit of poetry or verses from the Bible and thus make darning stockings one of the alluring adventures of the day."

"How about washing dishes?" he asked.

"Uncle Danny," she responded, "being a college professor you must have some acquaintance with the principle of geometrical ratio."

"A mere bowing acquaintance, Aunt Serena."

"Well, even with that you must realize that thousands upon thousands of combinations can be made of the number of different articles that enter into the process of dish-washing. Well, I try to work another one of those combinations each time and that keeps me delightfully entertained. Besides, I always treat myself to a choice bit of reading as a reward for good conduct after the dishes have been put away, and that anticipation serves to accelerate the process."

"You certainly are resourceful, Aunt Serena," said Uncle Danny.

"Why shouldn't I be? When the conscience is clean, the brain clear, the heart-action right, and the digestive organs doing their appointed work as they should, people ought to be resourceful. Sometimes I call the plates and things by names of historical characters when I am giving them their ablution and then I have great fun."

"That's a new game to me," said Uncle Danny.

"Yes, youth has its disadvantages," retorted Aunt Serena.

"Did you hear that, Nick?" exploded Uncle Danny. "But, Aunt Serena, by what names do you call the dishes?"

"Well, that very much depends. The dainty cups, saucers, and spoons are called Florence Nightingale, Clara Barton, Frances Willard, Joan of Arc, Antigone, and Queen Esther. But the pots, pans, and skillets I call Duke of Alva, Margaret of Anjou, Nero, General Weyler, and Herod, and then scrub them with religious zeal."

"Do you ever have a Benedict Arnold?"

"Yes," she answered.

"What treatment do you give him?"

"Turn on the hot water."

"You must be a diligent reader, Aunt Serena."

"That sounds very like a platitude to me, Uncle Danny, and proves that you are a school-teacher."

"Guilty! But why?" asked he.

"So many teachers whom I know seem to do so little reading themselves that they think I deserve a medal because I read books."

"Do you mean to tell me that you know teachers who are not readers?"

"Oh, many of them, and so do you, Sir Innocence. When some of them do read a book they spread the news abroad with painful volubility. It seems to me that they might as well regale folks with accounts of their eating, their sleeping, and their breathing. They seem to have a craving for intellectuality rather than intelligence."

"Aha, I see," said Uncle Danny, "you use words with discrimination."

"Certainly, or there's no use using them at all," she replied.

"Just so. But how do you differentiate the intellectual teacher from the intelligent teacher?"

"Why," she replied, "the intellectual teacher is a sort of academic mummy who has accumulated a lot of cant phrases, but the intelligent teacher is broad awake and drinks in life at every pore and so has life to give out. If I had to sit in the class-room of some of these intellectuals I'd probably become violent at some of their offerings of musty, cob-webby bromides."

"Glory be, Aunt Serena, you ought to be at the head of some normal school."

"That would be dangerous, Uncle Danny, for I'd certainly fracture some of their traditions. Besides, I have done and still do some missionary work in that line. Take my granddaughter, Louise, as a sample. That girl didn't just happen, Uncle Danny."

"Well, no," drawled Uncle Danny. "I shouldn't say that such a fine girl as Louise is fortuitous."

"Indeed, no," replied Aunt Serena. "She's a product of blood, training, and atmosphere. I did my best to train her father so that he would select a genuine woman to be the mother of his children, and he did. Then these parents did the same for Louise, and among us we have created an atmosphere of the right sort, and you know the result."

"Yea, verily, Aunt Serena, and applaud heartily. But, even yet, you, yourself, need explanation."

"Uncle Danny, you do not look so innocent as you sound. I am my own explanation. Just because you happen to know some women of eighty years who are querulous, misanthropic, pessimistic, and dyspeptic, you look upon me as an exception. But you are wrong. They are the exceptions. Tennyson wrote 'Crossing the Bar' at eighty-three and Michael Angelo chiseled the great *Pieta* at eighty, so why

should I mope in a corner or be out of harmony with life at eighty? Why, Uncle Danny, I'm both living and alive."

"Yes, very much so," he laughed.

"The best explanation of me, perhaps," she continued, "is that I love children. I read their books to and with them; I play their games; and I live over my own childhood with them every day. That's how I keep my youth."

"But your robust health, Aunt Serena. How do you explain that?"

"It doesn't need explanation. It just is. The ill-health of many women who are my juniors is what needs explanation. They have ruined their stomachs, their dispositions, and their chances for an agreeable old age by disobeying the tenets of sane living. They take into their stomachs the commodities of the drug store instead of the meat shop, and then become afflicted with too much introspection. They can't think of anything but their ailments, poor souls, and thus become so disagreeable that people leave them to sit alone in a corner and mope out the rest of their days. That's the blessedness of the reading-habit. If these poor unfortunates had only acquired this habit they would forget their ailments in their joy of reading Shakespeare, and the Bible. I think the *Comedy of Errors* will cure

almost any case of dyspepsia. I wish all the teachers in our schools could be made to realize that the reading-habit is the real antidote for disagreeable old age."

"A good definition and I'll certainly disseminate it, Aunt Serena, with full credit to the author. And may I add that it is also an antidote for loneliness?"

"Yes, and with emphasis, Uncle Danny. Why, I don't even require the services of a dog to keep me company."

"Ouch!" ejaculated Uncle Danny. "Come alive there, Nick, and help defend the family name and honor. We certainly must bring suit against this audacious person for defamation of character. But, at any rate, Aunt Serena, you certainly never feel the want of good society."

"Ah, Uncle Danny, that was very neatly turned, and I thank you. Indeed, no; I never lack society even when I am alone, and, if I did I'd be inexpressibly ashamed of myself. I'd feel it a deep humiliation to be compelled to seek society. I aspire to be society, and, in all modesty, I can say that I am society. Children cry for me, and their parents seem to find me agreeable."

"But," quizzed Uncle Danny, "can you manage to be agreeable at all times in spite of wind, weather, rumors of war, and failure of crops?"

"Oh, it isn't so difficult. If I don't feel agreeable I try to seem agreeable."

"Ah, a sort of 'assumed virtue though you have it not' policy. Is that it?" he asked.

"Rather," she replied, "assume virtue in order to have it. The more agreeable I seem the more agreeable I feel and the more agreeable I feel the more agreeable I am."

"Did it ever occur to you, Aunt Serena, that you have discovered the principle of psychological perpetual motion?"

"Do you, by any chance, Uncle Danny, happen to mean perpetual emotion?"

"Amendment accepted," he replied, "but it is psychological right enough. You read psychology I take it, Aunt Serena?"

"Indeed, yes," she responded, "I need it in my business."

"Just what is this business you speak of?" he queried.

"Well, sir, if you will give loose rein to your prurient curiosity and drag my innermost secrets from me *vi et armis,* my business is to make each day worth while both to myself and others."

"What is the recipe, Aunt Serena? I'd like to have it."

"Oh, you have it right enough, or I've been mis-

informed. You and I both know that people soon grow tiresome who talk without saying anything. Long ago I was vaccinated for just that malady, and now my big aim is to make language the expression of thought and not mere effervescence."

"Well, Aunt Serena, I can't think that you'll ever be relegated to the chimney corner by the younger generation."

"All I can say to that, Uncle Danny, is that should that ever come to pass I shall know that it comes upon me as a punishment for my defection in falling behind the procession. So, to avert such a calamity, I have been trying, for years, to essay the rôle of the drum-major and have been striving to lead the band."

"Hooray!" cried Uncle Danny, "I want to join the band."

"Very well, sir. I like your spirit and we must make a place for you. But I have understood that your specialty is manipulating a steam-roller."

"Oh, that is as may be," he responded, "but I can also coo as gently as the sucking dove."

"Very well, then, you are a member of the band, and we'll find some—"

"Goodness gracious sakes alive," challenged Louise rushing out upon the veranda, "what in the name of Mozart, Bill Nye and Samantha Allen, do

you two old last year's birds' nests find to talk about that you shun the society of cultivated people so long?"

"This linguistic granddaughter of yours, Aunt Serena, is a most precipitate young person and needs heroic treatment," retorted Uncle Danny, with affected seriousness.

"Who placed you in the judgment-seat, Mr. Uncle Danny?" she flashed back.

"Oh, I just scrambled in," he replied.

"That's the school-teacher of it. I wonder if I'll come to be like that?" she queried.

"Well, you certainly have some of the symptoms," said Aunt Serena, "rushing out here as you did and taking your elders, if not betters, to task in that violent fashion because they seemed to prefer the society of each other to your own. That seemed a bit school-teachery to me."

"Poor abused granny!" replied Louise. "Come right into the house and we'll play our duet for Uncle Danny and the Cook tribe, and that will make you feel better no matter how the others may feel. You see, Uncle Danny, how I calm her down when her soul gets mussed up. I lead her to the piano and let her show off her musical skill."

"Silly!" retorted Aunt Serena.

"Can she really play, Louise?" asked Uncle Danny.

"Come on in, granny, and let us show this boob professor what real music is. Can she play, Uncle Danny? Can she play? Why, I'm a puling infant by comparison. Why, man, I caught all my music from this dear old granny, only I'm not specially susceptible and have only a mild attack."

"Well, if that's the way of it," he responded affably, "I'll try not to make a wry face while you two verdant amateurs agitate the keys."

And then they played. At the conclusion of their duet they were all taken aback by applause in the front yard which Esther discovered to be the tribute which an automobile party was paying to the two artists. Nor would they be appeased without a response to their encore, and not even then till Aunt Serena and Louise stood side by side before them under the electric light on the veranda. Their enthusiasm reached the very limits of decorum when they came to realize that the exquisite music with which they had been regaled had flowed from the fingers of the beautiful white-haired lady and the charming granddaughter.

"Aunt Serena," said George when they had all resumed their chairs in the parlor, "I told you that

the Cook ozone would tone you up. Now, really, you played fairly well for an amateur. If you keep up your practising you may learn to play yet. I'm hoping the time may come when I'll be willing to recognize you when I meet you in polite society."

"Oh, you do, do you?" Aunt Serena replied. "And by what hocus-pocus do you hope to gain admission into this polite society you speak of?"

"George," said Mr. Cook, "I've been trying, all your life, to teach you not to play with edge tools."

"Yes, my dear forebear, but there are a lot of things you have taught me that I'm trying to forget," replied George.

"Touch!" cried Mrs. Cook. "And they named you Homer. I wonder how they ever came to do it?"

"That's easy," Mr. Cook responded. "They named me Homer in anticipation of the great stores of wisdom I am supposed to be accumulating through the influence of the lady who had sufficient compassion upon me to yield herself to the thraldom of the marriage bond."

"I can prove an alibi," cried George.

"Here, too," echoed Esther.

"Nick," roared Uncle Danny, "come on in; the water's fine. We have here a family row of colossal proportions. 'Charge, Chester, charge! On, Stanley, on! Let loose the dogs of war!'"

"Careful, Uncle Danny, careful there. You're liable to have a seizure," counseled Louise. "How often have I admonished you to study repose of character. Now, if you think your heart will stand the strain I'd like to give you the second chapter on pedagogy."

"Esther," drawled Uncle Danny, "please have somebody page George Strayer, Will Bagley, John Dewey and Charley Judd. Some pedagogical doings are imminent right here and now and those worthies ought to be present."

"I think, Louise," said Aunt Serena, "you'd better defer that second chapter till to-morrow. I want Uncle Danny to have his beauty sleep."

"Amen!" shouted George.

"Saved!" said Uncle Danny. "But before I yield me to the seductive influence of Morpheus I'd like to say, Aunt Serena, that I'm proud of you and proud of myself for being proud of you. When I get home I'll read again my *De Senectute* in memory of you."

"Uncle Danny," she replied, "there's hope for you yet."

## CHAPTER XV

### THE PICNIC

JUNE was reigning again in full splendor and Sugar Loaf was reveling in her robes of summer. Commencement week had passed but, here and there, visitors still lingered among their friends to prolong the pleasant taste in their hearts which the week had produced. Aunt Serena and Louise Maynard were guests in the Benton home and Guinevere now came and went in that home as freely as in her own. She was the other daughter of that household, for Mr. and Mrs. Benton, as well as Mary, had made her their own. She had absorbed the qualities of their home and then the home had absorbed her whole-heartedly and unreservedly. Mary's brother, Will, had returned from the West to have his annual vacation at commencement time in order to enjoy communion with friends and to see the town, its environs, and the people all at their best.

The inevitableness of a picnic need not be dwelt upon. It just had to be, and it was. When three girls of fertile brains and abounding life foregather

beneath one roof in mid-June a picnic amounts to a predestination. Nor is there need to enlarge upon the appointments of that picnic. Suffice it to say that Mary, Guinevere, and Louise constituted the committee of arrangements aided and abetted by sundry members of the community of the male variety. It is a fact, no less curious than incomprehensible, that, in times of picnics, the male contingent of society decline from their high estate as "the lords of creation" and become the veriest vassals. They fetch and carry, in obedience to commands, and seem to regard their servitude as a rare privilege. This is one of the palpable contradictions in affairs mundane.

The picnic was held, of course, upon the umbrageous summit of Sugar Loaf. No other place would have seemed either fitting or agreeable to the devotees of this eminence who constituted the picnic party. Automobiles were requisitioned for transportation purposes and chauffeurs seemed distinctly prevalent. Aunt Serena rode up in state, you may believe, and Uncle Danny did no less, flanked on either side by Nick and Robert Hilton. How the girls reached their destination no one seemed to know. They were just there, and that was all, and, apparently, quite enough. To describe the feast

itself one would need to use some large multiple of Riley's stanza:

"The jelly—the jam and the marmalade,
And the cherry and quince preserves she made!
And the sweet-sour pickles of peach and pear,
With cinnamon in 'em, and all things rare!—
And the more we ate was the more to spare,
Out to Old Aunt Mary's!"

It needs to be told at this juncture that the feast was spread upon a table, a table of large dimensions, to be exact, and, withal, a most substantial one. There were camp chairs about this table, also, but at the two heads, for it had two heads, there were armchairs, one for Aunt Serena and the other for Uncle Danny.

Tom Foster was much in evidence, a veritable major-general of leadership and resourcefulness. He was not the expansive Tom of the days of yore for his airiness had evaporated and the fundamental Tom now appeared. He was quiet, and gentle, and seemed to find his chief delight in looking to the comfort of others. His good nature bubbled forth, however, at every turn and suffused the entire company. As Tom went hither and thither in his efficient way he encountered Uncle Danny and without

preliminaries asked, "Uncle Danny, what sort of a girl is Louise Maynard?"

"About your size."

"As bad as that?"

"No; as good as that."

"Say, Uncle Danny, pleasant weather we are having."

"Yes, very; and the early potatoes are looking fine."

"Ah, pastoral, bucolic, I see. Wherefore?"

"I spend time at the Cook farm."

"Therefore, Miss Maynard. Is it not so?"

"Exactly. You ought to go out sometime."

"I've been."

"Oho, so you merely seek confirmation of your own judgment as to the aforesaid Louise Maynard?"

"Exactly."

"Judgment affirmed and confirmed," said Uncle Danny as Tom went on his laughing way bearing a hamper toward the table.

It fell to the lot of Will Benton and Guinevere to seek out wild flowers for the scheme of table decorations and Will accepted the commission with a degree of alacrity that caused a ripple of amusement among the bystanders. In the midst of their quest which was yielding gratifying returns, Will said

haltingly to his companion, "Guinevere, I'm glad to have this time to ourselves, for I want to tell you just how often, I mean how much, I, well, I hardly know how to say it, but—"

"Stop it, Will; stop it this minute," she replied. "I'll pick the flowers while you run down home to get the book you read that in. You need a few more rehearsals before you try to recite that to a sensitive young woman who—"

"Why, Guinevere, I—"

"Now, look here, Will Benton, if you are determined to go over all that book-stuff to me please omit all the rest and begin at the place where you would think it a blessed privilege to pour out your heart's blood for me, and how storm, and stress, and poverty, and all the rest—clean down to the foot of the page would all be endured with rapture to the nth degree for my sake."

"But, Guinevere, my dear—"

"Hold hard there, Will Benton. Spare your terms of endearment till a more convenient season."

"More convenient season—when will that be?"

"Goose! When I'm Mrs. Will Benton, of course."

"But, Guinevere, I don't understand."

"Of course you don't, silly. Men are such dense things. Perhaps I should have told you before that I'm to be Mrs. Will Benton one of these days; but

that has been one of the settled facts such a long time that I really forgot to mention it."

"This is so sudden!" he exclaimed. "But, Guinevere, how did this wonderful thing become one of your settled facts?"

"Why, stupid, it is written in the stars. You should have been studying astronomy all this while."

"Well, anyhow, I've discovered a star of the first magnitude right here on Sugar Loaf and—"

"Stop it! Save all that pretty talk for our second wedding anniversary. On that occasion you can proceed to give a demonstration of pouring out your heart's blood by building a fire in the kitchen stove, washing the dishes, and scrubbing the back porch; and while pouring out your heart's blood in that way you can entertain me by calling me a star of the first magnitude."

"All these things I solemnly agree to do, my hand upon my heart."

"Stupid! Your heart's on the other side."

" 'Tisn't on either side. You have it."

"Good! Oh, you're coming on. I'll make a man of you yet."

"May you have joy in this very laudable even if difficult enterprise. But, tell me, Guinevere, how did this all come to pass? How does it come that you are to marry me?"

The birds were singing all about, the leaves rustling, and the flowers exhaling fragrance.

"Well, if you must know. There isn't another man on earth that I would marry. So, it became a question of either marrying you or remaining unmarried and the vote was cast in your favor."

"But how and when did this all start?"

"The first time I visited in the Benton home. I fell hopelessly in love with every blessed member of the family and made up my mind then and there that I'd be a Benton in name as well as in fact and I've never wavered in that resolve for a single minute."

"Blessed be all the saints, angels, and others all and sundry!"

"And say, Will, would you mind kissing me just to prove that you hold no grudge?"

"Well, I should—"

And the birds kept right on singing.

Never did a more fervent appeal ascend to the Throne than that which issued from the heart through the lips of the Reverend Simeon Borland as he invoked the divine blessing while the company stood in reverence about that picnic table. When they were seated Uncle Danny said in a quiet voice, "Mr. Borland, that invocation came from your heart."

"Yes, Uncle Danny, it did and—"

"Wait, Simeon," said Mrs. Borland, rising, "let me tell it. Uncle Danny, both you and all these good friends ought to learn what a wonderful thing you did for this good husband of mine the night you gave him that 'spiritual massage,' as he called it in recounting the affair to me. The change has been nothing short of wonderful and I bless you every day of my life. He is so big, so human, and—"

"Yes," cried Robert, "and he preaches better than he used to. I don't go to sleep in church any more."

"And the heavens were opened," replied Mr. Borland, "and the Lord spake to His servant through the lips of a child. Robert, I thank you and shall strive even more diligently in the future to avert somnolence."

"Where's Miss Burke?" asked Tom as the feast proceeded. "I saw her about here a while back."

"Why," answered Mary, "she came upon us as I was pinning a rose on Theodore's lapel—"

"Theodore! Well, I'll be bumfuzzled!" cried Will. "Theodore! Mother, did you hear what that slip of a daughter said? Theodore! Wow!"

"Uncle Danny, be kind enough to place your foot upon that infant and suppress him. As I was trying to say, when Miss Burke saw me pinning that

rose she made a bee-line down the hill, looking neither to the right nor to the left. Be it far from me to give voice to my suspicions."

"I think," drawled Uncle Danny, "that for many moons Miss Burke has been angling in the circumambient atmosphere, and that rose episode convinced her that it wasn't a nibble after all that she had got and she concluded to go home to read up on the subject of bait."

"Uncle Danny, whatever are you talking about?" asked Robert.

"I think Mary might enlighten you, Robert," Uncle Danny replied. "Or, certainly Aunt Serena. She can resolve all mysteries."

"Save and excepting Uncle Danny," Aunt Serena responded.

"Folks," said Doctor Dunlevy, rising, "in the presence of this goodly company I'd like to take this occasion to make my humble and grateful acknowledgments to our friend and benefactor, Nick. He it was who first pointed out to me the way of light and right. Nick, I salute you. It was you who helped me descend from the airship in which I rode into this place. From my superior height I looked upon you in disdain and I now apologize. Through you, I, at length, discovered Uncle Danny, and through his blessed eyes I saw Mary Benton, who

at this minute seems to be wearing a diamond ring for which she exchanged this rose. Nick, you were the harbinger of this happy day, and I salute you."

Then ensued a period of silence during which Mary left the table, went to where Nick lay, and gathered him into her arms.

"Why, Mary Benton, you're crying," exclaimed Esther Cook.

"Of course, I'm crying," Mary replied, "and I'm glad of it. Some good day you'll be crying for the same reason. I'd go this minute and hug Uncle Danny, but I've done that so often that I fear me he grows tired."

"Never!" shouted Uncle Danny.

"Shades of Darwin!" came from Aunt Serena. "Here I've been bothering my head for years over this thing of evolution and now I have it all cleared up right before my eyes. Enter the alembic of Uncle Danny a Doctor of Philosophy, then shake well before using, and out pops a lover and our well-beloved Mary Benton hugs Nick and cries."

"Uncle Danny," Robert asked, "is this an executive session?"

"The symptoms are becoming quite favorable to say the least. A few more confessions and we shall certainly be in the midst of an executive session."

"Folks," said Will Benton, rising in his place—

"That's the stuff, William," cried George Cook. "Get it off your chest. Make a clean breast of it! Did you steal a horse or are you some young Lochinvar come out of the West—or both?"

"Yes, out with it, Billy," cried Tom. "You'll feel better when you get rid of it."

"Just as soon as these infantile vaporings subside," continued Will, "I'd like to tell you people, in the strictest confidence, that this young Smythe person, an hour ago, lured me out among the sylvan scenes hereabouts and told me brazenly that she is aiming, all in good time, to become Mrs. Will Benton. Then I kissed her—by request."

"Morning paper!" shouted Tom rushing around the table. "Get your morning paper. Great sensation! Daylight osculation on the top of Sugar Loaf. Life and love among the clouds. Morning paper! Everybody up in the air. Secure your paper before the rush!"

"Yes, Robert," Uncle Danny interrupted, "this is an executive session, and one of great import and joy."

"Uncle Danny," said Guinevere, "it was a good thing I took domestic science."

"So it was," said Mrs. Smythe, "but just think what an awful grueling and grilling it cost your poor mother. That man, Uncle Danny, sitting right

there, manipulated the steam-roller in the most expert fashion. Why, I ache every time I think of it."

"Yes, mother," Guinevere responded, "but you lived happy ever after. And just think! It gave me Will Benton."

"Is that all?" asked George.

"All?" she answered back. "All? George Cook, you are a benighted heathen not to see what a wonderful opportunity I have to practise on Will my domestic science and other missionary theories. I think I have discovered in him the rudiments of a fairly useful man about the house and it shall be my mission in life to develop these to the utmost."

"Oh, for a life-preserver!" ejaculated Will.

"Mrs. Smythe," said Tom, "permit me to observe that I, too, have had experience with that self-same steam-roller."

"Shake, Tom! Here, too!" said Doctor Dunlevy.

"Now, Uncle Danny," said Aunt Serena, "what have you to say for yourself? Were all your efforts with that steam-roller as productive of good results as the victims, or beneficiaries, or patients whom I see about me? Did you ever fail?"

"Yes," said Uncle Danny sadly. "I failed once and dismally. But I have succeeded so often and well that I forget about the one failure in my great joy of the others."

"Uncle Danny," Louise asked, "why don't you ever bring your steam-roller out to the farm with you when you come?"

"Why, bless you, child," he replied, "I always have it with me but some one out there always purloins the spark-plug and then the thing won't work. No," he continued after a pause, "it is quite impossible to operate the steam-roller out there. You are all so busy and so happy in your work that you have no time for the foibles that call for steam-rolling. And when Aunt Serena is there each day is a benediction."

"Amen and Amen!" exclaimed Mrs. Cook.

Then arose Homer Cook saying, with much feeling:

"Friends, before we separate I fain would propose a toast to Uncle Danny and Nick. Two truer friends can not be conceived. Uncle Danny we all know and love. He has entered into the life of each member of this company in his own gentle way, until now he is a vital part of each one of us. He knows that our affection is his best reward for all he has been to us and done for us. I suspect, however, that we have thought of Nick as an incident, a negligible incident, perhaps. That is a mistake. Nick is a distinct entity, a heroic figure, if you will, in this

great drama of life. If you will but consider for a moment you will realize that Nick typifies many of the fundamental things in life. He represents fidelity, constancy, perseverance, and affection without stint and to the end. If you would know what is meant by 'faithful unto death' you have but to envisage Nick. Do you think that, if Uncle Danny were in danger, Nick would desert him because of cold, or hunger, or fire, or flood, or pain? Never! He would be faithful unto death and would stay to the end. Such is a faithful dog—such is Nick. I just now recall one stanza of a poem which I once read relating to a dog.

'I talk to him when I'm lonesome-like
And I'm sure that he understands,
When he looks at me so attentively
And gently licks my hands!

'Then he rubs his nose on my tailored clothes,
But I never say aught thereat,
For the good Lord knows I can buy more clothes,
But never a friend like that.'

Then here's to Uncle Danny and Nick."

Nick went home that evening with a floral collar about his neck and as he and Uncle Danny trudged

homeward in the twilight, with Robert between them, the people along their way, men, women, and children, greeted them in cheery tones and smiled upon them.

THE END

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